Beyond the Fall

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Beyond the Fall

by toggledog

Summary

Hannibal appreciates the romantic notion that Will can't forgo his tenuous hold onto his shaky principles and give himself fully to a serial killer, but also can't give him up either, hence, in Will’s reasoning, both have to die.
Only, Hannibal refuses to let that happen.
Set immediately after the 'cliff dive', in which Hannibal first has to deal with making sure they don't perish, before attending to their physical injuries and Will's continuing confused emotions, confident that the younger man will eventually come to the conclusion that their relationship is just and needed.

Notes

I know I can't do justice to the beautiful, sensual amazing show that is Hannibal, but I had to 'continue on' the story, as it were. As per the show, both Hannibal and Will are pretty messed up.

Chapter 1

In the tumble from the cliff, whether consciously or unconsciously, Will had positioned himself and Hannibal in an advantageous position to offer both the best chance of survival. As they plummeted to their unknown fate, Hannibal kept his murder partner close to his torso, tightening his hold around him, as Will did likewise, his arms strong around Hannibal's muscular back. Hannibal appreciated the romantic notion that Will could not forgo his tenuous hold onto his shaky principles and give himself fully to a serial killer, but also couldn't give him up either, hence, in Will's reasoning, both had to die.

As gravity continued to suck them down, Hannibal gripped Will to his torso and reached out with his other hand, snatching at branches growing out from the edges of the cliff, to slow down their tumultuous descent, the branches cutting into his palms. Now, he had to count bloodied, cut up hands among his injuries, along with being shot and bleeding out. His poor Will was also bloodied and cut and would undoubtedly suffer more once they hit the water.

Their bodies met the swirling tide side-on, which Hannibal was aware would lessen the impact. Even so, it was bone shuttering, as though he had slammed through concrete, his entire being stabbed with a multitude of knives. The water sucked them down further and Will struggled against him, kicking, wriggling as one of the fish from his fantasy river. Hannibal hugged him tighter, using his entire weight to keep his murder partner with him. They continued to go down, the current thrashing their bodies this way and that, rocks and sticks bashing their bodies. One large stone struck Hannibal in his shoulder, dislodging Will from him.

An emotion he had only ever experienced when he was in the presence of the man before him bolted through his traumatised being, galvanizing him to action. They had survived the plunge. Against all odds. He wasn't going to allow Will to die now. With his muscles screaming, Hannibal kicked with his legs, grabbing the now slack Will and pulling him again to him, kicking up now to the surface. They broke out and Hannibal gulped in life satiating, blessed air.

Will remained slack, his chest rigid.

The emotion dug its frigid fingers into Hannibal again, one he had felt when it came to himself, on rare occasions. But never had he felt it when it came to another human being.

Until Will Graham.

His initial experience of the emotion was when he had believed Tobias Budge had killed Will. This was followed by another, more pleasant emotion when Will entered his study later, following Jack Crawford.

Grasping the slack Will to him with one arm, he used the other to glide through the water, his feet to kick. He had to reach land soon.

Fear continued to lance its cold, hard edged blade through his shuddering viscera.

Initially intrigued, he had experimented with this emotion, placing Will in dangerous situations, to revel in his terror from the chance Will would be hurt or even killed. Of course, Will always survived, coming further to the reality of himself that Hannibal was attempting to crystallise for him.

Will is a survivor. He will not die now. I won't allow it.

He spied a pebbled shore, surrounded by mossy cliff, and swam to it. The sting in his shoulder as he pushed through the water indicated a dislocation, and the ache in his side signalled a broken rib. So, it turned out he was not in good shape. The bullet in his gut would have to be attended to. Will, however, was in worse shape.

Hannibal reached the shallow water and grasped Will under his shoulders, rushing him forward and lying him on his side on the shore, before opening his mouth. A torrent of water gushed out. He then rolled him back onto his back, his fear confirmed. Will wasn't breathing. The lancing terror now burrowing into his brain, Hannibal grabbed his own shoulder and wrenched it back into place, groaning as burning pain shot through him, before placing his palms on Will's chest and beginning compressions.

One two three for five… *come on Will.* Six seven eight nine ten…*You will not die on me*… eleven twelve thirteen fourteen fifteen sixteen seventeen eighteen nineteen twenty…. thirty.

Two breaths. As he pressed his lips to Will's, Hannibal inwardly grimaced. He had fantasized their reunion kiss to be in far more romantic circumstances.

Damn you, Will. Survive!

He pressed his hands against Will's chest and started compressions again.

One two three for five six-

A choking noise rose out of Will's lips. Stopping compressions, Hannibal rolled him onto his side, where more water rushed out of Will's mouth. He chocked once again and mud now accompanied the water spilling out of his lungs. Will's chest rose and fell, the sound of his shuddering breath a blessing to Hannibal's tympanics.

"Good boy…" Hannibal said, stroking his hair. "Good Will, good." He buried his face in Will's silken curls, allowing himself the luxury of relief. Will was now breathing, was alive.

Pressing his fingers into his murder partner's skull, Hannibal felt and observed for injuries, continuing down Will's neck, spine and back, then down the back of his legs. He then rolled him onto his front and continued the same on the front of his body. Will too had a dislocated shoulder, two cracked ribs, and a collie's fracture, along with the two stab wounds and various other bruises from the fight with Dolarhyde.

No matter. My Will is alive.

"Oh Will, what a mess we've both got ourselves into this time," Hannibal grinned to the still unconscious man.

So far, to Hannibal, they were tracking well. They had survived the fall and Will was breathing. However, he was also incessantly shivering. His next priority was to find a place to find warmth, or hypothermia would ensnare its tendrils around them. Lifting Will into his arms and resting his head against his chest, Hannibal stumbled forward.

Luck was on their side that night. The beach lead to an overgrown path, which continued to a cosy, thatch-roofed cottage, a holiday house that had been abandoned by the owners for the winter. Hannibal located the key under a pot plant and let him and Will in, depositing the smaller man on the varnished wooden floorboards, as he searched the house for blankets and towels. Once located, he stripped Will of his damp clothes and towelled him dry. Again, he allowed an ironic smile, not the undressing of the former FBI profiler he had fantasised. Once dry, Hannibal wrapped him in the warm woollen blankets and lay him on the wide red couch before the woodfire heater, taking a moment to brush the hair off his forehead and run his thumb through the blood on his cheek. Soon, he would focus on Will's wounds, to cease the scarring as much as possible. However, for now, that wasn't a priority.

Towelling himself dry, Hannibal wrapped himself in a blanket and busied himself around the woodfire heater, using the firelighters, kindling and wood nearby to get the fire going. Will remained unconscious. No matter, Hannibal whistled as he busied himself. He could see this being a constant in their relationship; him cooking, attending to simple chores while Will played with the dogs, or went out to zen his always busy mind by standing in a river. Yes, the fire set, Hannibal closed the woodfire heater door. That would be a pleasant possibility.

However, for that possibility the occur, he would have to attend to their injuries.

The medicine cabinet in the small bathroom to the back of the cabin yielded little supplies. Hannibal tore open the first aid kit and examined his wound. It was a clean shot, the bullet lodging in his liver to the left of his aorta. The bleeding was not the spurting of an arterial bleed but was profuse. Hannibal applied pressure to the wound with a thick dressing and wrapped gauze around his waist, to keep the dressing in place, before walking out to the lounge, to Will. Grasping the other man's dislocated shoulder, he snapped the bone back into place. Will grunted, his eyelids fluttering before his face resumed its serene slumber. His wrist was inflamed and deformed but the skin was not broken. The fracture appeared only partial. Even so, Hannibal needed more supplies to deal with both of their injuries.

Moving back to the woodfire heater, he picked up the fire poker and opened the door, heating the poker on the flames, before unwrapping his bandage, flinging off the dressing and taking a deep breath. The pain was intense, immediate, as he cauterised the wound. Breathing heavily, he flung the poker down onto the tiles at his feet, closed the door of the woodfire heater and collapsed against the couch, next to the still unconscious Will. He wouldn't bleed to death, but he still had a bullet lodged in his gut. It would need to be attended to, sooner than later, possibly involving surgery.

Sighing, Hannibal turned his attention back to Will, reopening the first aid kit he'd taken out from the bathroom, to dig out the dressing pack. With great care, Hannibal used a wet flannel to wipe the blood from Will's face, and peroxide to clean the wound. If he treated the injury well, the scarring would be minimal. Lingering his fingers on Will's chin, Hannibal allowed Will's angelic countenance to engulf his weary being, providing needed sustenance. The man

before him fascinated him as no other. To Hannibal, his beauty took on many dimensions, incorporating all of the five major bodily senses.

Will favoured such cheap tacky cologne. His soap changed when he was married, from plain to one wafting a floral scent. Will's shampoo was always citrusy. Another smell permeated, underlying the others, a smell that was Will's own, one Hannibal could sense before he even entered the room. A bitter scent that travelled through Hannibal's nose to tingle through his veins. A scent he craved, whenever Will was not in his vicinity.

Will's gentle voice. In one of their sessions Will had remarked he had an affinity for accents. Not important for his line of work and more of a party trick. Regardless, Hannibal enjoyed hearing him speak, for the workings of his magnificent brain to be manifest in his words.

Will was not particularly tactile. He allowed touch, and to be touched, in sparse amounts. Hannibal delighted in these moments, the strong jaw in his hands, the sensation of rough facial hair, of the soft, springy curls on his head. Will had allowed him to taste his mouth only once before, the first time Hannibal had organised for them to run away together. Standing by the fireplace in Hannibal's study, Will had smiled in a flirtatious manner, had gripped the back of Hannibal's neck and forced his head down, to smash their lips together, entangle their tongues. Hannibal was aware, at that time, that Will was manipulating him. His devious partner had lied about the death of Freddie Lounds. If he hadn't been so betrayed, he would have been proud of Will, for the extent of his manipulation. No, he amended, he *had* been proud.

They had released and Will had informed him he was going back to his house to 'pick up supplies'. Hannibal had debated whether to lie him down and take him, right there in front of the fire. Will would have allowed it, would have perhaps even enjoyed Hannibal's attentions. But it would have been inauthentic. Will would have given his body out of obligation over desire. The animal side of Hannibal had considered letting Will do it; if Will consented to being his whore, so be it. The refined side won over. Despite Will's impending betrayal, he couldn't use him in such a manner.

The visual, to Hannibal, was always the most mundane of the five senses, because it was the most obvious. Will had the hallmarks of a particular type of delicate male beauty; the strong jaw, the large eyes, the curly hair, the refined features, but his physicality wasn't enough to describe the combined ache and sooth washing through Hannibal's tortured being when he looked upon him. If Will never wanted to be intimate with Hannibal, he could accept this. Being with him, appraising his intense beauty, was enough of a welcome balm for him.

Hannibal cleaned the stab wound in his shoulder and covered both wounds with wet dressings. If they were to survive, he would need more than the piddling supplies the house had bestowed them. He considered his options. There was a pharmacy ten kilometres away. He'd have to steal a car.

*

"Hello, Will," Hannibal came back into the room, which was stifling. Taking off the coat he'd found hung up in one of the wardrobes to the back of the place (as well as other clothes, for

which Hannibal was grateful), he placed the attire on the coat rack by the door and knelt before his partner, taking his wrist. His pulse was strong and steady.

“The excitement of tonight has worn you out, hasn’t it?” Hannibal mused to the sleeping man. “I have purloined medical supplies for us, from the local pharmacy.”

Fortune did, indeed favour them that night. Upon investigation, he discovered a motorcycle parked in the cottage’s garage.The pharmacy was closed and the alarm went off when he entered but, with no houses for miles around, Hannibal wasn’t too bothered. He had switched if off and focused on what he needed to steal, to help him and Will heal.

Hannibal opened his bag and placed the supplies one by one on the coffee table before Will.

“Morphine… you are going to need it in the next week… plaster to make the cast for your arm, supplies for stitches for your lacerations, antibiotics, anti-inflammatories…”

Will remained in slumber, not caring for Hannibal’s stolen medical supplies.

*

Hannibal did not recall falling asleep, was not fortunate enough for his mind to drift off. Hours before, using now more sterile supplies from the pharmacy, he had cut open his wound again, and remove the bullet. An examination of the area revealed that his liver had been decimated but not any other organ. This was, indeed, fortunate. Baring no infection, his liver would grow back. The pain from the second cauterisation was enough to send him stumbling over to collapse into the lounge chair opposite Will. He supposed even the brain of the great Hannibal, with all of his amazing attributes, after being shot, falling off a cliff, almost drowning and surviving hypothermia, needed to shut down for a while.

His departure from slumber land was accelerated by the presence of the other before him; Will’s smell, the weight of his body so near. Something cold and hard pressed into his neck. Hannibal opened his eyelids, to Will standing over him, a knife against his throat.

“How are you feeling today, Will? I have attended to your injuries but they will need further medical attention, of course.”

Will’s blue irises swam with the usual opaque emotion. Hannibal again considered the concept of breaking open his skull, to feast upon his brain, the neurotransmitters sending thoughts and emotions too complicated for even a genius as Hannibal to comprehend.

“I forgive you for pulling us both off the cliff, Will. I understand why and I forgive you.”

“Why did I do it?” Will’s voice was steady, clear.

Hannibal cupped his chin, resting his finger pads on his cheeks, noting the slight tremble in Will’s jaw.

“Because you could not entirely accept the depth of your passions. You will always fight the darkness in you. That is the anguish of your empathy and also your gift. You took me with

you because, in your mind, you can't be with me and you can't be without me. You only succeeded with yourself, however. Yes, Will, you perished."

Tears clung to Will's dark lashes.

"I brought you back, gave you cpr on the beach below this cabin. If you must do this," Hannibal placed a hand on the knife. "It's okay. I understand."

The hand holding the knife trembled. Will blinked and the tears trailed down his cheeks.

"It's okay," Hannibal whispered.

The knife cluttered to the floor and he grasped his arms around Hannibal's back, pulling him into a firm embrace. Hannibal placed a hand on the small of his spine. This was contentment he had never experienced in his life; this man in his arms, warm and firm, with his Will Graham specific smell and smaller yet muscular frame.

His equal. His Will.

Will ended the hug and he allowed it.

"Come Will, I will need to stitch your cheek and check on your other injuries."

"You're not angry with me for trying to kill you… again?" Will asked, as both stood.

"No," Hannibal said, with a firm tone.

He understood Will's vulnerability, comprehended that one falsity from himself would send Will away from him. Now he finally had him there, he intended that he stay.

*

"Do you want me to help?" Will asked, wandering into the kitchen, where Hannibal was rolling pasta. The kitchen cupboards were stocked with perishable foods, however the quality was not enough to create the kind of magnificence, when it came to cooking, that Hannibal was used to serving.

"How are you feeling?" Hannibal asked.

"Fine," Will strolled over to stand by the dining window, looking out onto the view of the rugged path to the beach below. The sunlight streamed in to highlight his refined features and the reddish tints in his hair only obvious under certain light. Hannibal visually devoured the physical splendour before him, tingling warmth a welcome salve in his stomach. "I must be exciting company, with all of the time I've been sleeping the last week."

"An effect of the morphine. But I will begin to wean you off it today. The pain will spike, as a result."

"Have *you* been taking pain relief?" Will asked, turning to face him.

Hannibal allowed his lips to curl up. “Someone needs to cook, to take care of our injuries.” He dropped the rolling pin and came out from behind the kitchen bench, tilting Will’s head to the side by placing a hand under his chin. He had taken the stitches out the day before and the wound had healed well. The pink scar marring the flesh of Will’s right cheek was minimal, despite the depth of the initial knife wound. Hannibal was pleased with himself that he had preserved the loveliness of Will’s visage.

“This is healing well,” he said, trailing a finger along the healed tissue. Will gazed back at him, with the puppy dog expression he had used to his advantage in the past, to get what he wanted. However, Hannibal sensed no manipulation now, merely contemplation.

“What’s the plan, Hannibal?”

“I would allow two months for us to heal sufficiently from our injuries,” Hannibal said, stepping back and gently touching Will’s cast, under the sling. “Then we will go wherever you want, though I am partial to returning to Florence, at some point.”

“Yes, because you won’t be recognised there at all,” Will’s sarcasm was clear. Hannibal grinned back at him.

“Surely by now you have realised how much I enjoy testing these things.”

“I’ve realised,” Will’s sly grin dissolved to a frown. “Hannibal, we can’t stay here for two months.”

“Of course not. My plan is to stay long enough to recover enough to convalesce at another’s until we are healed enough to travel.”

“Bedelia,” Will’s lips quirked.

“I’m sure she will be in high spirits, to see us, don’t you think?”

“Don’t kill her,” Will said, running light fingers down his arm. “Please,” he continued in a seductive tone, his fingers now trailing down Hannibal’s chest, creating delicious goosebumps on Hannibal’s flesh, despite traveling over Hannibal’s borrowed shirt.

Hannibal grabbed his hand and held it.

“I always held a soft spot, of sorts, for Bedelia. No, I don’t intent to kill her. But it would be my pleasure to eat at least a portion of her.”

Will let go of Hannibal’s hand and moved to gaze out the window once more, dismissing Hannibal’s attentions. Of course, Will still needed time, to work through his complex brain to arrive at the understanding that being here, with Hannibal was good and just, for him. Hannibal returned to the kitchen and picked up the rolling pin.

“Bedelia confirmed you are in love with me,” Will said.

Hannibal’s brown eyes flicked up. Will still faced the window, as beautiful as the baroque paintings that would hang in Hannibal’s study and just as untouchable.

“I am.” He would gain nothing by lying. However, ‘in love’ was such an immature term, to describe the hold this man had over him, the insidious way he had devoured Hannibal’s entire life and being, as assuredly as any of Hannibal’s own victims. He could be with Will, could touch him, make love to him, even eat him but it would never be enough, would never assuage his hunger for him.

Will grew silent once more and Hannibal allowed it, returning to his pasta.

“You were right. I can’t not be with you. I tried…” Will’s voice trembled. “I was content. But Jack Crawford… I understand why he did it, why it was necessary… Seeing you again…It was always going to end this way.”

“Jack Crawford is a different type of predator to me but a predator never the less. He was also the instigator to your change. Though he still holds onto his belief of himself as a good person, an honourable man,” Hannibal tore off a portion of the pasta and rolled it in his hands.

Will turned from the window and stepped over to the bench, facing Hannibal, on the other side.

“When we killed Dolarhyde together… the intimacy…” As Will spoke, Hannibal placed the pasta onto the breadboard, to bequeath him his full attention. “It was like coming home.” Will walked around the edge of the bench, to stand in front of Hannibal. “Why do I keep denying my true nature?” He trailed a finger along the edge of Hannibal’s jaw. “I told myself Dolarhyde was a monster, he deserved to die. But I wanted it. Yearned for it. Want to do it again. With you… *Hannibal*.” The last word was spoken in such a sensual tone that Hannibal’s heart spasmed.

Will leaned forward. This kiss was not out of manipulation or betrayal. This was a kiss of need, of want.

Of love.

Hannibal pressed his torso against Will’s, allowing his five most common senses to engulf him; the taste of Will’s mouth; toothpaste mixed with the coffee,the moans emanating from Will’s mouth, the texture of the smooth flesh of his back under the oversized clothes they had found in the wardrobe of the master bedroom, after burying their bloodied own attire, the smell of sweat and him.

His Will.

Hannibal drew away, to gaze at his expression, the blue eyes staring back with wanton need. Without words, Will assented to Hannibal directing him around the bench and to the coach in the living room, for Hannibal to lay him down and peel him out of the comically oversized shirt and jeans he’d been forced to wear, over the past week.

Hannibal allowed Will to be a sensory experience, as satisfying as any of his gustatory achievements; the pebble of his nipple, the muscles of his abdomen under soft flesh, the gasp from Will’s larynx, as he bit down on his stomach and hip, hard enough to cause him to

bleed, before licking the area, relishing in the metallic blood. As he continued his exploration further down, Will spoke.

“No biting there, Hannibal.”

Hannibal looked up, from where he was positioned at his crotch, and grinned.

“No, I intend to sate my hunger in other ways.”

He lowered his mouth on Will’s most sensitive of body parts, using the interior of his mouth, his tongue, his saliva, to suck and lick, to cause such lovely whimpers from Will’s own mouth, his hand tugging at Hannibal’s hair hard enough for sharp pain to cascade down his scalp, encouraging him to suck harder, move his head faster up and down on the turgid organ. Will groaned and, as his come hit Hannibal’s throat, he swallowed, in his greed, desperate for this essence of his partner, this fluid to become part of him as well.

Together, as one, in all aspects of their lives.

Will continued to moan as his orgasm petered out and Hannibal licked up the rest of his essential fluids, before, mindful of Will’s plaster cast, flipping Will onto his front and kissing down his spine, yielding to his craving for more, needing to taste and touch him on his other side. He reached Will’s buttocks and bit down hard into his right buttock, again causing him to bleed. Will jumped and swore. Hannibal bit him on his left buttock, licking the metallic blood. As he opened his buttocks, needing to taste his most intimate of access to his body, Will again spoke.

“Hannibal, I’m not up for…”

Hannibal slithered back up his torso, stroking his hair and whispering in his ear.

“I only intend to taste you, nothing more. Are you agreeable to this?”

Will nodded with a quick, nervous flick of his head, and Hannibal slid down him, once more.

“But of course, you’re not up for anything right now. But I will fix that,” Hannibal said, fondling his lax member.

“Terrible pun for you, Hannibal. You’re usually better than that,” Will murmured into the arm of the couch.

Hannibal noted the second meaning of Will’s statement. ‘Not up for’ indicated he could be amenable to being penetrated sometime in the future. That was an occurrence to look forward to. Hannibal pried open his buttocks and licked his entrance, before plunging his tongue inside. Will’s breath quickened.

That’s it.

Hannibal licked and tasted him, imagining his tongue plunging further up inside him, wrapping around all of his organs, tasting their vitality.

Yes, my Will. Yes.

Will grinded against the couch, his organ now erect in Hannibal's hand, as he stroked him in time with the puncturing of his tongue inside him. To taste, to feel the fragility of his hip bone, the rough hairs on his legs, to hear Will's increasing moans. He could devour him, chop him into pieces, drink all of his blood and semen and fluids and it wouldn't be enough, would never be enough.

Will cried out, his insides quivering around Hannibal's tongue, his erection pulsing. Allowing himself to be overcome, Hannibal drew back, jerking his own erection as the bliss overtook, his come splattering over Will's buttocks, the creamy texture an artful palette against the blue and red of the bruises and bleeding from Hannibal's teeth, the pale pink of Will's flesh. Hannibal allowed the image to seep into his mind, to be stored in the hypothalamus for further recall, if necessary, before tasting his own release, pulling Will over onto his front and tasting Will's on his stomach, intermingling their come together in his mouth.

After Hannibal rolled off him, Will was silent, as he dressed. The fact he was naked, in their first intimate encounter, and Hannibal was fully clothed, was symbolic, to Hannibal of their relationship, however in an inverse fashion. Outwardly, he was clothed, and Will naked. The deeper reality allayed a less conventional wisdom. Hannibal had been naked from the start, and Will had been clothed, his gentile, shy nature an armour for the deeper, dark ache within.

I broke through, but only because he has allowed me to. As he has seen me, the true me, so I know the true complexity of his macabre yearnings.

And he was right. It was beautiful.

"I need to have a shower," Will said.

Hannibal allowed him to leave the room. Will's first intimacy, not only with another man, but a serial killer, would be needed to be examined in great detail. It was clear, to Hannibal, that Will only stayed by the wisp of a thread. Any mistake on Hannibal's part would cause the thread to tear, for Will to leave his life, once more. Of course, he would come back, he would always come back. But Hannibal refused to once more long for him, be excited by the prospect of seeing him, hearing his cultured voice. Smell him. His Will. It was undignified.

Returning to his food preparation, Hannibal's innards coiled around each other, in intricate knots. Perhaps he had instigated intimacy too soon. How Will reacted, when coming out of the shower, would determine his next strategy.

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Hannibal had placed the pasta in the boiling water and was working on the sauce, when Will returned to the room, still wearing the oversized t-shirt and jeans, his plaster cast now in a sling made from a t-shirt he'd evidentially found in a cupboard.

"That smells divine. You haven't eaten your particular meat for the past week. How have you coped?" Will said, standing over the counter and grinning at him.

Although Hannibal professed to know the intimate confidences of Will's heart, the younger man still had the capacity to surprise him. Of all the reactions he had considered to their intimacy; the need to pull away further from Hannibal, to sublimate his confusion in anger or fear, this flirtatious banter had not been among his considerations.

"I'm saving myself for a satisfying feast soon."

"Bedelia," Will said, coming into the kitchen.

"The coriander will give the sauce a nice kick. Will you get it out of the pantry for me?" Hannibal asked.

Will did as he bid, handing the item to him, and watching Hannibal pour it into the mixture, before talking again.

"My first intimacy with another man… a serial killer…" William giggled. "And it was…" He ran a hand up Hannibal's thigh. "It was fantastic, to tell the truth. I want to go again… soon…"

This was a side of Will Hannibal had not been appraised of before, a side Hannibal very much approved of.

"The choice between intimacy with a beautiful man or the cooking of a subpar feast…You're making this difficult for me, Will."

"You think I'm beautiful?" Will asked, raising his eyebrows.

Hannibal was aware this teasing and flirtation wasn't proof Will had made his choice to be with him, to devote himself to him one hundred percent, as Hannibal had with Will. However, the knot in his innards loosened, in recognition that Will was at least on a path towards the light, or, in his case, the dark.

"You are. I was not the only one to notice. Some of the staff in the prison referred to you as 'Jack Crawford's pretty boy', in a derogatory way, I'm afraid, as though your natural pretty boy looks overcome your vast intelligence. Dolarhyde did not find you attractive at all. But then, I don't consider him to be the best judge of beauty, considering his own flaws in seeing his own. Cleft palate or not, a lack of physical beauty was hardly the problem, when it came to Dolarhyde."

"You thought *Dolarhyde* was handsome?" Will's tone was incredulous.

Do I detect a hint of jealousy there, Will?

"He fit the paradigm of traditional male beauty, yes. But he had the fatal flaw of not being *you*."

"You're not too bad yourself," Will teased. "Mr Elegant Tall Dark and Handsome Brilliant Psychiatrist. Being a serial killer adds a slight flaw."

Hannibal allowed the compliment to warm him.

“Murderer Husbands. Interesting by-line. As much as others will be repulsed by us, there will be others who will be fans, will want to send us letters of declarations of idolisation,” Hannibal said.

With a bemused expression quirking his lips, Will came up and placed his arm around Hannibal’s waist, indulging in his mouth.

“You will decide,” Hannibal said, entangling his fingers in his curls. “We will hunt together, but you will decide on the prey. And I will find the most tantalising of prey for you. You will only be quelled taking the life of the most horrific of humans, those who prey on others. It’s fitting to prey on them in return.”

Will jerked back, the humour wiping off his pretty visage, as he wrapped his arm around his stomach.

“I fought against it for so long, talking rehabilitation over vengeance. But some can’t be rehabilitated. I used to think vengeance makes us the same as them. I guess I still do. But I need to do this,” Will’s brows furrowed.

“I understand. Your empathy deems this so. Always has.”

“You knew,” Will said, locking eyes with Hannibal, blue on brown. “You knew from the beginning.”

“In reality, my first thought before I saw you was of your terrible cologne. My second was that you were far more pretty a man than I had pictured and it would be a pleasure to have one of such beauty, as well as intellect, to physically admire… and manipulate for my enjoyment… to begin with yes, that is what I thought.”

“You irritated me,” Will shrugged. “That was my first impression.”

“I know. Deliberately,” Hannibal said. “It was my pleasure to make such an extremely pretty, intellectually gifted man so flustered. When you stormed out of the room, it was incredibly adorable.”

“Your condescension is noted,” Will said, laughing.

*

Will was silent throughout dinner. Being accustomed to his moods over the past week, Hannibal allowed it, in the knowledge that Will was once more weighing up his emotions, when it came to the situation. When he walked over to him and sat on his lap, after dinner, Hannibal was not surprised. Although lust did form a part of his attachment to Will, sexual release wasn’t necessary to their relationship. If Will decided that, despite that afternoon’s intimacy, he ultimately didn’t want to be in a sexual relationship with Hannibal, Hannibal would accept him. He would take his murder partner however Will gave him the privilege of having him. However, to Will, being in a relationship entailed being intimate in a sexual way. Hence, when he gripped Hannibal’s hand and led him to the bedroom, he followed. When

Will handed him the Vaseline from the bathroom, with an anticipatory yet tense expression, he took it off him.

Hannibal took his time in preparing him, taking his erection in his mouth, as he pressed his fingers inside, slowly, gingerly, careful not to harm him. Will came, loud, screaming and Hannibal again drank him, swallowed his come, as man dying of thirst in the desert, before crawling up his body, to continue his attentions, as he touched his jaw, kissed his sweet lips, confident he would bring Will to become erect once more. They had time. He glanced down at his arm, lying on its side in the plaster cast.

“I never did get around to signing this,” Hannibal joked, as he lifted Will’s fingers and kissed them, one by one. Will gripped him by the hair and brought their lips together, running his hands down Hannibal’s back, gripping at his buttocks.

Kissing and caressing and biting and licking each other, while preparing for the inevitable, Will’s erection rose in Hannibal’s stroking hand.

“You ready?” Hannibal asked, removing his Vaseline slick fingers from inside of him.

Will nodded, a sliver of anticipation crossing his delicate features.

“It would be best if you went on top,” Hannibal said, slicking more Vaseline onto his own erection. “That way, you can control the depth of movement.”

“Still being technical,” Will smirked, pushing Hannibal onto his back and crawling to position himself.

As he pressed into Will’s tight heat, Hannibal closed is eyelids and sighed, allowing himself to feel, to be comprehensive of the most intimate of connections. But no, he told himself. This was for Will. He opened his eyes and watched, departing himself from the pleasure of his body, focusing only on Will’s beauty, on the aesthetics of his movement, as his partner flung his head back and groaned, sliding up and down. Hannibal grasped his erection, to help him along. His pretty visage was flushed, his sweat and sexual excitement flooding Hannibal’s nostrils. With a groan, Will came, his release splashing between them, spasming around Hannibal’s erection, before he collapsed against Hannibal’s chest, trembling, panting. Hannibal pulled him closer, aligning their bodies, so they were chest to chest, stomach to stomach, inside him, on him, as though they could meld together, to be as one. He allowed the intimacy for as long as he was able, before he moved, thrusting into the tight heat, slow before building speed, biting into Will’s neck and licking the blood, licking along the scar caused by the knife blade, his hands in his partner’s silken hair, his ears vibrating with the slap of their bodies, his own frenzied grunts.

His orgasm was a revelation beyond mere extreme pleasure, it was a turning, a change into something more. As he had bequeathed the ultimate of himself when he killed with Will, so had their relationship now been cemented, at least in Will’s mind, by bestowing Hannibal more than he had given any other man; his own body. Hannibal already considered them to be together, as one, life partners, without needing the sexual penetration. But he understood that Will needed this act, beyond all of their other intimacy, to comprehend they were truly together as lovers.

Still panting, Will gazed up at him with an expression of wonder, as he reached up and trailed a finger down Hannibal's cheek. Hannibal wiped his face, staring in astonishment at the salt water clinging to his fingers.

Tears. He had cried.

The last time he recalled tears was many years before, when he learned the truth of Misha.

Will Graham does this to you. He is the only one who can, the only one who ever will.

But still… tears…

"Are you alright?" Hannibal asked.

"I should ask you the same thing…" Will said. "I'm fine. A little sore. But that's ok. To be expected, I guess…sleep. We should sleep."

He rolled onto his side and Hannibal snuggled up behind him, wrapping his arm around his waist and breathing the citrus scent of his hair.

"I fantasized sex with you to be far more rough and kinky," Will said, with a humoured tone. "The biting was good. But I was also thinking handcuffs, you just throwing me down and taking what you wanted from me. I'd fight you… to begin with."

"Your rape fantasy with me stemmed from your inability, at the time, to believe your own repressed desire for me-"

"Hannibal, shut up with the psychoanalysing," Will snapped. "Besides, you already did violate me, by forcing a detached finger down my throat."

Hannibal clambered off him, as Will constructed his wall between them, once more.

"I won't deny that what I did was… wrong."

Will's laughter held no humour, as he rolled to face him, moving his fractured wrist to a comfortable position.

"You killed Abigail, tried to kill all of my friends and family, tried to cut open my scalp. You have an odd way of being in love, Hannibal."

"You know what I am, Will. Just as you are changing, so am I. I can't deny my essential nature to others will change. But it has changed with you. Past, in this case, is not an indicator of the future. *You* I will not harm. Not any more. My love for you prevents it."

"I wish I wasn't in love with you," Will said, his face crumpling. "But I am. You are the only one who has ever understood me. The whole me. The only one who ever tried to."

"It is understandable that you find it hard to trust me, even now. But I will prove am worthy of being with you," Hannibal tilted his chin up to look into his overly bright blue eyes, stroking his finger along his jaw. "I promise you are safe here, with me."

“Safe…” Will’s mouth twisted in a crooked half-grin and he rested his head on Hannibal’s chest. Hannibal looped his arm around his waist and resumed petting his hair.

*

“We should make plans to go to Bedelia by tonight or tomorrow at latest,” Hannibal said, taking the cup of coffee from Will.

After waking up to more lazy lovemaking, in which they had used their hands to pleasure each other, followed by a lazier shower together, Hannibal had insisted on cooking breakfast while Will relented to making coffee. Hannibal whistled as he stirred the pancake batter, the contentment, that was now a constant that Will Graham was in his life, at its optimum level.

“We’ll have to throw out everything we’ve touched, clean the entire house of our fingerprints. They’ll find our DNA, find out we were here…” Will took a sip of the coffee.

Hannibal shrugged, took a sip of his own coffee, placed it on the counter and whistled as he poured the batter into the frypan. He was so uncharacteristically consumed by his cooking and the pure bliss settling inside his soul, he was unaware Will was staring at him, until the movement of Will placing his coffee mug on the bench turned his head.

“I don’t think I’ve ever seen you so happy, except of course when you were manipulating me to whatever ridiculous plan you were enjoying at the time. To think, all it took was fucking me.”

This was a test of Hannibal’s response. He would have to tread carefully in his answer.

“The intimacy was important for you, Will, not for me. I would have been just as happy to admire you and contain my lustful thoughts to my own hand, had you not wished to be intimate. My love for you goes beyond mere physical desire.”

“You enjoyed the sex,” Will said.

“Of course,” Hannibal turned the knob of the stove down.

“So how often have you… used your hand?”

Hannibal came over and cupped his cheek in his palm.

“You’re a desirable beautiful man. To believe I didn’t pleasure myself when thinking of you in an intimate matter, at times, would be naïve.”

“I did too. Imagine being with you. Naked. Bloody. Felt so wrong. You were right. It was a rape fantasy, you forcing yourself onto me… But, when I was masturbating I always came so hard,” Will admitted, his eyes skittering down. “I don’t consider myself in any way queer. There were only women… until you. It’s only you, Hannibal. And you’re right. It’s beyond the physical. You’ve burrowed inside me, nestled now in my very being.”

Hannibal drew him into his arms and kissed him firmly on the mouth, their tongues exploring each other, before tugging him into a comfortable embrace, with Will’s head on his chest. He

found it an interesting aspect of Will's psyche that he had fantasized about being sexually powerless and violated by Hannibal, when, in reality, he had been the instigator of both of their initial sexual encounters. Hannibal's own sexual fantasies involving Will had been far more tamer, involving seduction with wine and music, followed by a squirming Will handcuffed to his bed begging to be taken.

"We will hunt again together, my Will. Soon," Hannibal promised.

"But not Bedelia. You can eat parts of her, fine. But I too have a soft spot for her. She's… interesting…"

"A house by the river, with stray dogs for you in a habitat full of sinful debauched humans committing the most atrocious of crimes. Shame we will have to leave the United States, home to the highest known number of serial killers."

"There are plenty in other countries. We will be able to hunt together, Hannibal. We'll find prey wherever we go."

Hannibal buried his face in Will's hair once more, smiling into his scalp.

Tbc…

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

Thanks to all who are reading/sent kudos/bookmarked.

Hannibal trailed the teenager in a far subtler fashion than the young man followed his victims. Though in the fledgling stages of his criminal career, Hannibal saw potential in the predator. His most recent victim, a frazzled woman yelling at her toddler son to “Come back here, James!”, swivelled from her handbag seated in the trolley, for mere seconds. In that time, the teenager pilfered her purse, as he had five others, in the time Hannibal was watching him. He was precise in his art of stealing and would work for Hannibal’s purposes that day, but needed coaching, to move up to the next level. Had Hannibal the time, perhaps he would dispense valuable advice, to propel him on a track that would be agreeable to him, but less so for others. However, for now, he was aware of how much time was pressing. Following the teenager around the corner, Hannibal cornered his victim in a quiet corridor leading to the toilets, as the teenager inspected his ill gains.

“I wouldn’t do that here, if I were you,” Hannibal said.

The teenager jumped.

“I wasn’t-“ Red blanched the boy’s pimply cheeks.

Hannibal quelled any denials with a pointed look.

“Not a smart move. Too easy to get caught.”

“Who are you?” The teenager said, glancing at the entrance, as he clutched the purse closer to his chest.

“I want you to do something for me. I will give you fifty dollars now.”

Patches of white now crept through the red of his facial flesh.

“Woh! No man, I don’t go in for-“ He placed his hands up in the air, in a supplicating motion.

“Fifty dollars after you come back.”

The teenager dropped his hands, bulbous nose now crinkling with confusion.

“There is a blonde woman in the chemist opposite Walmart, wearing a long red coat,” Hannibal took fifty dollars out of his trouser pocket. “I want you to steal her keys. I will

make copies and you will then place them back in her handbag."

The teenager stared at Hannibal as though he had grown a second head out of his own forehead. Hannibal wiggled the note. Greed overcame his bewilderment and the teenager took the money off him.

*

The instant Hannibal spied Will, frustration clamped his innards, overcoming the usual charge zapping his insides upon gazing at his Will's beloved form. The younger man had not only come out of the car they had stolen, into the open where it was unsafe, he was also kneeling on the ground, pawing over a dirty mutt, which appeared to be a pitt-bull/rottweiler crossbreed, two of Hannibal's least favourite canines.

"Hannibal!" Will stood, as Hannibal approached, a sunny smile elevating his already angelic visage. "You did it? You have a copy of the keys?"

The dog remained seated, staring up at him and panting, its tongue lolling out if its wide mouth, expecting more pats. Following Hannibal's eyes, Will spoke.

"She just… came up to me… a stray…" Will smiled once more and cocked his head, running a hand through his hair, in an obvious attempt to appear alluring.

"Will, no," Hannibal said, his tone stern.

"Please Hannibal…" Will tried another tactic; adopting his typical puppy-eyed expression that tended to be successful, when it came to Hannibal acceding to his wishes.

"Will, you know this is unfeasible. We can't take this dog."

"I have an idea. Hear me out. I walk the dog near Bedelia's house. In disguise. That way, we can better monitor her movements."

Will wasn't going to let this one go, Hannibal could tell. Preferring not to argue in a carpark, where they could get caught by the authorities, Hannibal relented, for the moment.

"It goes in the back seat. With you making sure it doesn't jump against the driver's seat," he used the inhibitor to click the car locks open.

"Thank you, Hannibal. You don't regret this."

Opening the door and climbing into the driver's side, Hannibal refused to respond. Will bent down to the dog, once more.

"We're going for a ride. Yes, yes we are," he said, as the dog yapped and licked his face.

*

Will's attentions on the dog continued throughout the afternoon, as they surveilled Bedelia's newly acquired two-story Italian style villa; hugging the small yappy mutt, kissing it,

granting more love and affection than he had ever showed his murder partner. Hannibal understood the concept of jealousy, but had never before experienced the emotion towards a stray dog. This was unbecoming of him. He would even go so far as to say humiliating. He understood Will's natural human need for the simple companionship a pet provided, intellectually, at least. However, this dog was also proof of Hannibal's own continuing distance from other humans, his inability to understand why they needed this animal bond, of the warmth and love he was supposed to experience with a pet but never could. Upon further introspection, he could not detangle whether his jealousy was of the dog, or of Will, for his ability to form such a close connection with another being, a feat Hannibal was unable to achieve other than with his lovely murder partner.

The sky was bruised purple and pink when Bedelia's impalla rolled out of the gate, and Will and Hannibal set their plan into action. Will was still determined to keep the damned mutt, so Hannibal compromised, using the anaesthetics he would later also use on Bedelia on the dog, to keep the stupid thing from yapping. For a moment, he had been tempted to deliver an 'accidental' overdose of the medication. However, were he to kill Will's new friend, Will would leave him, for one final betrayal. Even if it was over a damned dog.

Using the copied keys from Bedelia's original, stolen set, Hannibal opened the padlock on the gate and Will, with the mutt in his arms, followed. They walked up the brick path surrounded by a well-kept garden of colourful flowers, using the keys to open the fly screen and front door. As soon as they stepped inside, the alarm blared. Will gasped. Hannibal could sense his need to flee, the panic threatening to overtake. He tapped in the day and month of Bedelia's birth date on the keypad on the wall, to the right of the door. The alarm switched off, ceasing the cacophonous noise.

"People are so predictable nowadays," Hannibal said. "I would have expected more from Bedelia however. How disappointing."

Grabbing the hand that wasn't holding the dog, Hannibal led Will through the darkened surroundings. He had been to Bedelia's house a few times since she had moved, and thus knew the outlay of the lounge. The ex psychiatrist favoured a simple aesthetic; minimalist modern furniture, sparse and lacking the personal touches houses usually held; items providing a snapshot into the owner's personality, as Will's fishing lines, in his old house. Bedelia's, by contrast, evoked the stern impersonal beauty of an art gallery; the pleasure of beholding the interior underlined by the displeasure of not being allowed to physically immerse oneself.

"I'm going to place Missy in a room upstairs," Will said, as they continued to the kitchen situated at the back of the complex.

Hannibal nodded. Crashing and thudding sounded, as Will negotiated the dark, unfamiliar rooms, his way further compromised by the dog in one arm and his healing fractured wrist.

Oh Will, you adorable man.

Hannibal grinned and shook his head, switching on the light, in the assurance that this room was too far back to be seen from the road, before opening Bedelia's cupboards and whistling an old Lithuanian tune to himself.

Bedelia didn't disappoint. Her cupboards were full of an interesting array of foods, spices and herbs. Hannibal piled out ingredients, going through, in his mind, what would be needed for a tasty salad, to compliment Bedelia's fine meat.

"Would you like to thinly slice the tomatoes?" Hannibal asked, as Will returned from upstairs. "The entrée will be nagaimo and shrimp paste, with tomato fennel gratin and spicy maple glazed carrots to go with the main meat."

"*Most* of that sounds delicious," Will said, hunting around the cupboards for a chopping board.

As both worked together on the food and discussed their strategy for when Bedelia arrived back home, Hannibal's smile remained constant, content with their domestic harmony. Will's food preparation ability was far less advanced than his, which showed in his wonky chopping of vegetables. Even with a healing fractured arm, Hannibal was certain he could dice the food better than he had.

No matter, we will have plenty of time for me to teach him the proper way to chop vegetables and fruit.

They were making good headway, when Hannibal's finely tuned senses cut in. He walked over and switched off the light, squeezing Will's hand in a 'cease' motion.

Fingering the case with the already prepped syringe in his pocket, Hannibal crept out of the kitchen, his dexterous lower limbs allowing no sound. Will didn't follow, which was suitable, and in keeping with what they had arranged. He hoped the damned dog wouldn't wake.

As Hannibal, with silent feet padding on the carpet, stepped into the front lounge, Bedelia came into the foyer wearing a beautiful blue dress. She turned off the alarm and Hannibal made his move. Rushing forward, he stuck the syringe into her arm, pushing the plunger down, before switching on the light, needing her to comprehend who had come for her. Her head turned, eyes wide, face pale, as her hands reached out for her attacker. Hannibal easily stepped back, away from her. Still struggling, she fell to the ground, before crawling to the door.

"How long will this take?" Will asked, coming into the room.

Bedelia gurgled, reaching for the second man, attempting to say his name.

"Not long," Hannibal said. "The anaesthetic is of a dose that-"

With a loud thud, Bedelia collapsed forward, slamming her head on the foyer carpet.

"She's back early. I was hoping to finish more of the cooking. Still…"

Hannibal lifted her into his arms and carried her through the lounge and adjoining hall to the back study, where he positioned her on top of the pool table. Will came in with the saw. Hannibal smiled, his heart leaping into his throat, as he took the sharp item off him.

Yes, my love. This is the ultimate of what I can give you.

Unable to resist, he brushed lips against his partner's, and brought the saw to Bedelia's thigh. As he sliced through flesh, muscle and bone, Hannibal closed his eyelids, his exhale loud, allowing himself the special splendour of the moment, the intense connection he now shared with both Bedelia and his Will. Opening his eyes, he noticed Will now stood closer towards the entrance.

"Will?" Hannibal's intestines constricted around each other.

Will's gentle visage was now a rigid mask, his irises glittering, the blue now grey in the fading light creeping in through the slit between the drawn back blinds.

Unnerved, Hannibal continued to saw. This was not the tender moment he had envisioned, for him and Will. He had expected Will display the same lovely passion as when they had killed Dolarhyde together; eager to join in on the bloody mayhem. The leg hit the ground with a thud, and he took off his shirt to tourniquet the gaping wound. That would do until he had the chance for cauterisation.

Will stepped out of the room.

Although Hannibal needed to go to his partner, to comprehend why he couldn't share in the intimacy of Bedelia's amputation, he had to cease Bedelia from bleeding out first. Once he had made certain she wasn't going to haemorrhage to death, and carried her to the dining room, positioning her at the table, he went to locate Will.

Will I ever understand him, with the richness that I crave to?

He found the younger man in the upstairs spare bedroom, seated on the edge of the bed, and patting the still unconscious dog.

"I was reminded of Beverly," Will said, pitching his voice more towards the dog, than Hannibal. "I understood why you killed her. I even understand the theatrics of displaying the body the way you did. *I* caused it. I sent her after you."

"No. It was my choice. And mine alone," Hannibal stood in the entrance, trusting his instinct not to go to him, despite his need to reassure him with his gentle touch.

"But I knew, from her going after you there was a chance you would kill her."

"How did it feel?" Hannibal asked.

"Don't do this, Hannibal. Not now. I'm not in the mood," Will rubbed his face.

"Many of my victims didn't deserve what I did to them. I would argue the only one who definitively did was the one I killed with you. Dolarhyde."

"Deserve, doesn't deserve…What does it matter, ultimately?" Will said, looking up, anguish scrunching his features. "We aren't avenging angels, Hannibal."

"No, not me," Hannibal walked in, sat beside him and took his clammy hand in his. "But you have a moral code. You make the determination as to who should die."

“No, that’s arrogance,” Will’s curls flopped against his forehead, as he vehemently shook his head.

“Perhaps, but in your empathy, you can make the determination more than anyone else can.”

“Skills for murder…” Will laughed. “I liked Beverly. What you did to her, displaying her like that, wasn’t right.”

“I would argue it was her death that brought you to the path you are on now. With me. In that way, she will always be special for the both of us.”

Will faced Hannibal, intrigue overcoming the pain in his blue irises.

“How are you going to cook Bedelia’s leg?” Will asked.

Grinning, Hannibal coiled a finger around a tangle by his ear.

*

Bedelia struck out with the fork as soon as Hannibal entered the dining room. Expecting such hijinks, after all, his ex-psychiatrist was a feisty woman, he easily disarmed her and placed the fork back on the feast laden table. The sight of her own roasted and garnished leg may have prompted her violence. Or maybe he was overthinking her reasons. The knowledge of his promises of what he would do to her once he was out of prison would be enough to cause her to at least make one attempt on his life.

As he pulled out a chair at the side of the table, Will entered the room, having changed into the shirt and trousers Hannibal had bought for him at the shopping complex and appearing sufficiently handsome. Hannibal, himself, also wore a new shirt, and matching jacket and trousers. Now all three were dressed for dinner, Hannibal’s opulent sensibility was mollified.

“I would skirt around Bedelia if I were you, Will. She just attempted to assault me with a fork.”

Glancing at her, Will did as Hannibal bid, moving to sit opposite Hannibal.

“May I say you look lovely, Will. As do you, Bedelia. Date didn’t go well, I take it?” Hannibal said, standing to carve up the red meat. “Would you do the honour of serving Bedelia a plate of my entrée, Will?”

Will took Bedelia’s plate off her, and scooped the nagaimo and shrimp paste onto the dish, placing it back down before her, before doing likewise with his and Hannibal’s plates.

“Thank you, my love,” Hannibal said, not facing Will, but Bedelia, herself, who stared back, her chest heaving, eyes bright. “You need not worry, Bedelia. We don’t intend to kill you. Or more pertinently, *Will* doesn’t intend to kill you. Was insistent. I defer to his good judgment. We merely need a place to stay, for six weeks, to recover from our injuries. You see, Will has a colles’ fracture and we are both healing from broken ribs.”

Bedelia focused her attention on Will.

“Do you honestly believe he won’t kill you, in the end?” Despite her fraught breathing, her voice was clear.

Good for you, Bedelia.

“It was always going to end up this way. You of all people knew this, Bedelia,” Will said. “In fact, as I recall, you were one of mine and Hannibal’s biggest supporters, like having our own psychiatric cheerleader.”

Bedelia kept eye contact with him, her lower lip trembling. With a cold smirk uptilting his lips, Will offered his plate to Hannibal.

“I’ll start with the main meal, if that’s okay, Hannibal. The *red* meat.”

Hannibal’s heart jolted and then raced, the excitement spiking his nerves reaching fever pitch, as he served a cut of Bedelia’s meat onto Will’s plate. Still not breaking eye contact with Bedelia, Will cut a portion with his knife, and bought the fork to his mouth. Watching the sensuous mouth and jaw, as he chewed and swallowed, pride in his Will rose to the forefront of Hannibal’s overly stimulated mind. There had been past jolts of the emotion; Will biting a chunk out of the cheek of the man wanting to transplant his own, the apex of when he killed with Hannibal. He had been convinced Will would not eat Bedelia’s meat. As was beginning to be a regular event, Will usurped his expectations in the most magnificent manner.

“… for Bedelia?” Will asked.

Hannibal stared at him a moment, realising that, in his typical musings on the man before him, he’d lost track of the conversation. However, it was not difficult to backtrack and work out what Will was saying.

“Certainly, Will,” he said, serving a portion of Bedelia’s meat onto the offered plate. When the dish was placed in front of her, she forcefully pushed it back, her cheeks pale, though gaining the colour back.

Digging a fork into his own entrée, Hannibal continued to gaze at his Will, the usual ecstasy marinating his viscera heightened by the younger man’s spiteful eating of Bedelia’s meat.

You truly are wonderful, Will.

“I knew you two had survived,” Bedelia said. “The news is making you out to be a hero, Will. A tragedy, killed in the line of duty, kidnapped by an obsessed Hannibal Lecter, shot and thrown off the cliff. They found blood from both of you two, proof a gun was fired. For once, Freddie Lounds isn’t the one writing the more salacious claims.”

“And what would those be?” Will asked.

“Hannibal kidnapped you, and him and his new protégé tortured and sexually assaulted you, before Hannibal murdered you both.”

Will laughed.

“That’s not in Hannibal’s style. It’s not even Dolarhyde’s style.”

“People are fascinated by the sexually scandalous, the grotesque. It doesn’t matter that it’s not realistic. Jack Crawford, of course, doesn’t believe it.”

“And Hannibal, himself?” Will prompted.

“They believe he’s long departed the country and is in hiding.”

“Yes, I imagine Hannibal would have needed a good rest after all of that supposed rape, torture and murder,” Will said with a sarcastic tone, pulling the entrée plate back over towards himself.

The scraping of plates and chewing of food pervaded the next few minutes, from one end of the table. Bedelia’s end remained silent.

“When I die, will you mourn me, Will?” Bedelia asked.

“You’re not going to die,” Will scowled, placing his cutlery down. “I’m going to check on Missy… Yes,” he said as he stood, “I have brought a dog into your house.”

As he departed the room, Bedelia’s jaw unhinged in an expression of pure outrage.

“I also didn’t want that smelly mutt destroying your precise and tidy surroundings, but Will insisted,” Hannibal said.

“Do you honestly believe he will stay with you? That you can run away together?” Bedelia whispered, her tone now acidic. “He will leave, as soon as he’s able to.”

“He loves me. And I love him,” Hannibal said, with great effort keeping his own tone even.

“You are still obsessed with him! Have been from the moment you laid eyes on him in Jack Crawford’s office. This won’t bode well for either of you.”

“He can’t leave. Bedelia, you understand this. Not out of fear or intimidation. His own nature prevents it. He yearns for the dark.”

“As much as he yearns for the light. He will always be pulled between the two. You will never have him, Hannibal, not completely. He’ll love you, as much as he can. But he can never succumb to your darkness.”

Oh Bedelia. You are not telling me anything I don’t already know. If this is your attempt to dissuade me from my future plans with Will, you are more out of touch than I’d conceived. Disappointing, really.

“Just as I can never succumb to his light. I am in a worse position than him. In my own nature, I have not the capacity to feel what he feels, to engender any empathy for others, but for him. With him, and only him, I experience emotions I have never before. We are becoming each other. And yet we can’t. As much as we meld, we repel.”

“The irony of your relationship is that you, the diagnosed psychopath, will always love him, the empath, more, will always yearn for that light more than he yearns for the dark.”

“He loves me enough,” Hannibal insisted. “He loved me enough to pull us both off the cliff, to kill Dolarhyde with me, to continue to stay with me now.”

Bedelia raised a well-manicured brow.

“I don’t deny he isn’t in love with you, yearns to be with you. But there will always be that conflict with him. And even you, with all of your incredible mind, will never know him. Not fully.”

“Did you consider, Bedelia, that I already know this, and that it is part of the appeal of him?”

Footsteps sounded leading up to the door to the dining room, which opened, before Will stepped in.

“Missy is fine. I’ve let her out into the back yard, for a bit of a run around.” He sat down at the table, his head swinging between Hannibal and Bedelia. “What have you said about me?”

“Were discussing our relationship, that is yours and mine, Will,” Hannibal said. “The combined complexity of two individually very complex men attempting such a feat.”

“You allowed me to try simple. I had everything I wanted, a funny, sweet wife and son who I loved. Turned out to be not enough, not for me. Turns out, I *like* complicated,” Will’s mouth twisted into a macabre leer.

*

Hannibal pulled the blanket up over Bedelia’s chest.

“Will I awaken tomorrow morning, Hannibal?” Bedelia asked.

“I promised Will you will not be killed. Sleep well.”

Hannibal stepped out of the room, switching off the light and closing the door, before pivoting to Will, standing in the hallway.

“We should-“ He began.

Will’s hot, hungry mouth on his ceased the discussion of any more plans. He could taste Bedelia, amongst the other treats of his partner’s mouth. Shoving his lithe body against his, Will ground his erection into Hannibal’s.

“Bedroom,” Will said.

Still locking lips, with hands exploring firm muscles under supple flesh, they stumbled their way into the spare bedroom. Ignoring the scent of dog antagonising his nostrils, Hannibal stripped Will naked with keen efficiency, and lay him down on his back on the bed.

“Put your hands over your head. I wish to try something,” Hannibal ordered.

His blue irises glittering with both wanton need and nerves, Will did as he bid. Kneeling over him, Hannibal grabbed his arms and, mindful of his fractured wrist, tied them to the wrought iron bars of the elaborate headboard.

“Yes, Hannibal… yes…”

“You want?” Hannibal asked, moving back.

Will’s entire frame trembled, his pupils blown so wide the blue irises were a thin line.

“I want *you*,” Will said.

Standing, Hannibal undressed, smoothed down the crinkles of his shirt with his hand and slung his shirt, trousers, and boxers over the back of a chair, before taking off his shoes and socks and placing them on the ground, at the base of said chair. Will laughter rang out.

“Seriously, Hannibal?” Will giggled. Will’s own clothes and shoes were strewn around the room, from where he’d tossed them, post Hannibal’s aggressive undressing.

Hannibal crawled up to hover over him, taking the time to visually devour the trembling, wanton man tied up before him. He could do whatever he wanted to Will in that moment, strike him, stab him, tear open his abdomen to glurge on the contents inside, combining Bedelia’s digesting flesh with his own.

“What are you going to do to me? Are you going to hurt me?” Will’s ribcage slammed up and down in a fashion that betrayed fear intermingling with his lust.

Hannibal trailed a hand down his face, finger pads delighting in the contrast of the soft flesh of his cheek and rougher facial hair of his jaw.

“No,” Hannibal said and slid down his body, needing to touch, to taste.

Once Will was sufficiently moaning and wriggling, Hannibal moved off him to go to the ensuite, locating Vaseline in the bathroom cabinet and returning to the feast before him. Preparation was an integral part of penetrating another man. Rather than viewing this as a burden, Hannibal took the joy that he did in the preparing of any of his meals. As his Vaseline laden fingers carefully moved inside Will, stretching his entrance, he was free to do as he willed with the rest of his body, deciding his inner thighs needed bruising with his teeth, his left hip needed to be sucked and licked, his nipples to be teased until he groaned and begged. The eventual penetration was quick and fast. Overwhelmed by Hannibal’s previous bodily devotion, Will cried out his orgasm within minutes, splattering come over his stomach and Hannibal’s stroking hand. Hannibal stilled, allowing Will’s pulsating flesh around his own erection to cease, before moving slower, relishing in the tight slick around him, as he licked the semen off his palm.

“That was… nice…” Will said, with his usual understated humour. “So, are you going to come now?” He tightened his legs around Hannibal’s waist.

“Patience, Will,” Hannibal increased the tempo of his thrusts, reaching down to brush a damp tendril of hair off his partner’s sweaty forehead. “You have such pretty hair. Did anyone ever tell you this?”

“A hairdresser once. Although she didn’t use the word ‘pretty’.”

Hannibal continued to run his hands through the curled strands, as his rhythm pounded Will’s body, jolting him with each forward thrust.

“You enjoy this, having me tied up,” Will smirked. “You could do anything you wanted to me, right now. Anything at all. I’d be powerless to stop you.”

Hannibal groaned, the words increasing his lust as assiduously as the taste, touch, smell and sight of Will’s body.

“You are enjoying this too…” Hannibal licked the salty sweat off his neck.

“I want it hard. I want you to *destroy* me, Hannibal.”

Hannibal bit down into his neck, drawing blood, thrusting harder, the entire bed now jolting, the frame slamming into the wall.

“Oh fuck, Hannibal-“

Hannibal groaned, thrust one more time and emptied himself inside his lover, before collapsing down onto him and orienting himself by breathing in his sweaty scent.

‘Yes, that was…nice,” Hannibal said, before kissing him all over his chest and stomach, and moving off the bed, deciding a shower was in order.

“Where are you going?” Will asked.

“Shower, and then I will need to clean up the kitchen, bring in Bedelia’s wheelchair.”

“Untie me. My wrist is hurting,”

Hannibal came over to examine the body part, concerned that, in his relish, he’d exacerbated Will’s injury. However, upon inspection, this wasn’t the case.

“I will give you some ibuprofen. That will help.”

“Untie me, Hannibal,” Will repeated.

Hannibal patted his cheek. “After I have showered and performed my tasks, I’ll consider it. You were right. I am enjoying this. You ready for me, to be taken whenever I wish. I suspect I will take you a few more times tonight. I won’t bother with preparation. I will just spread those lovely muscular thighs and thrust hard inside you, until your insides are coated with my release.”

“I’m not joking. Untie me now!” Will’s pretty visage twisted into the ‘I want’ scowl that always occurred when he didn’t get his way. “Hannibal! I don’t want this anymore.” Will jolted up and down. “If you keep me here, it will be against my will. If you ‘take me’ again, then you’ll be raping me!”

“Always so melodramatic,” Hannibal sighed, untying his hands.

Will scooted off the bed and stood on the other side to Hannibal, grabbing the blanket and wrapping it around his waist, usual genial features now livid with anger.

“So, you’ve worked out the difference between your fantasy and reality…”

“Fuck you, Hannibal!” Will shouted. “The moment I asked you to untie me, you should have respected my autonomy and boundaries. This is always the problem with you,” his hands waved, frantic, in the air. “You don’t know or care where the damn line is! In fact, you enjoy always going over the line.”

“I am sorry,” Hannibal said. “I was inaccurate in assuming you wished to continue with our bondage session and that your pleas to be untied were mere artifice, to your true desires. My wish was to fulfil both of our sexual fantasies. You of me as the aggressor and me with you tied up and wanton before me. May I suggest next time we incorporate a safe word into our more elaborate sexual hijinks? When you say it, I will stop.”

Will’s breathing slowed down, the electric fission of anger in the air dissipating. He glanced to the dresser to Hannibal’s right.

“Brush,” he said.

“Brush it is,” Hannibal said. “You say the word and I will stop. I promise. You know I keep my promises.”

Appearing satisfied, for now, Will climbed back into the bed, patting the space beside himself.

“Let’s just sleep.”

“I need to clean the kitchen-“

“Leave it till the morning, it’s fine.”

Hannibal’s mind returned to Will’s own appalling messy house that smelled of dog.

“It needs to be done now,” Hannibal said, kissing his shoulder, mindful of a particular mole that warranted further investigation, before pressing his lips against his hair. “I will be back soon.”

*

By the time Hannibal placed the dishes in the dishwasher, cleaned, tidied scrubbed, polished and mopped the kitchen and dining to his liking, retrieved their stolen car from up the road,

parking it in the driveway, and positioned the wheelchair before Bedelia's bed with a bow on the seat, two hours had passed. Pleased with himself for completing all of his tasks, Hannibal returned to the bedroom, to Will, curled up on his side on the bed.

"Will?"

Hannibal pulled back the covers and moved into the mattress next to him, pressing his body against his warm back, and his hand against his chest, to experience the soft rise and fall of his breath.

"Hmm…" Will said.

"What is in your mind right now?" Hannibal whispered into his ear.

Will sighed.

Hannibal kissed his lobe and settled down beside him.

*

Hannibal's sighs corresponded with Will's as he thrust into his yielding constricted heat. He had opted to not even attempt to tie Will up that chilly morning, resolving that straight missionary sex would sate both them both… for the time being.

"Brush," Will said, eyes still glowing with lust and want.

Hannibal instantly ceased thrusting, understanding that this was a test of their safe word, when Will was comfortable and secure. There was no need. No matter what Hannibal was doing, if Will said the safe word, he would stop. He would always stop.

"I will pull out slowly, okay."

Will nodded and Hannibal pulled out of him and rolled off his body.

"Thank you, Hannibal," Will now turned to kiss his chest, tug at his erection. "I've seen the way others look at you… How they want you. Handsome, sophisticated. Even knowing your colourful past…"

"Unfortunate for them. There is only one who I look at, who I want…" Hannibal cupped Will's jaw in his hands. "You tell me when you're comfortable enough to continue."

Will broke out into the type of smile that broke apart the clouds and steamed sunlight into the frigid room, to scorch both of their bodies.

"Now… take me now…"

Rolling him back onto his back, Hannibal proved to be very good at following instructions.

Tbc…

Chapter 3

The sweeping grandeur of the Italian opera was dulled by the tiny speakers of Bedelia's kitchen stereo system. However, this did not stem the goose bumps raising the hairs on Hannibal's arms, the welcome serenity infusing his system, the melodic hum that vibrated his larynx, as he flipped the golden pancake into the air to fry on the other side of the pan.

"What's this?" Will asked, padding into the kitchen wearing the dressing gown Hannibal had placed on the end of the bed, upon waking that morning. "Sounds familiar." His pretty visage was set in its usual early morning crumpled up scowl. In Hannibal's experience, it took until after breakfast and a coffee, before his partner displayed any of the natural sweetness that formed a part of his personality.

"'Le Nozzi di Figaro'," Hannibal said, watching Will switch on the kettle and bustle around the pantry, taking out coffee and sugar, before opening the fridge and grabbing the milk out. "I had the pleasure of seeing it live, when I was in Italy last."

"Nice for you to have such fun while I was languishing in hospital with a colostomy bag," Will grumbled, as he tea spooned out the sugar and coffee into his cup, followed by a splash of the milk.

"I kept tabs on you, of course," Hannibal said.

"Our entire flight from the authorities together, his focus was on *you*, Will," Bedelia wheeled into the kitchen in her new wheelchair. "How you were going, when you were going to come after him. I'm certain even while watching that opera, his mind was elsewhere, on a certain curly haired man…"

"Are you enjoying the wheelchair, Bedelia?" Hannibal asked. "Does it suit your needs, for now?"

"I'd much prefer my leg. But as an alternative, it's fine."

The kettle whistled and Will switched it off.

"Coffee, Bedelia?" He asked, pouring the boiled water into his own mug.

"Black, no sugar."

Hannibal piled the final pancake onto the plated stack on the bench beside himself, turned off the stove and, carrying the plate, walked under the archway separating the kitchen from dining room to the dining table.

"I have already condiments ready," he said, to the others following. "Honey, maple syrup."

"What a gracious host," Bedelia said, wheeling her chair in, as Hannibal placed the pancakes on the lace tablecloth before her.

“Would be perfect, apart from the whole amputation scenario,” Will said, taking a sip of his coffee as he sat down next to Hannibal.

Choosing to ignore Will’s grumpy remark, Hannibal grabbed the collar of Will’s t-shirt and tugged it across, to reveal his shoulder.

“Hannibal, do you really think this is appropriate, right now?” Will asked, as Hannibal again examined the misshapen mole on his shoulder, sporting irregular edges and a darker tint towards the middle.

“This mole,” Hannibal said. “It will need to be cut out.”

“Can we not-?” Will’s attempt to pull away was ceased by Hannibal’s hand on his other shoulder.

Bedelia rolled over and peered down at the irregular lesion.

“I agree.”

“I have local anaesthesia. Shouldn’t be too much of an issue,” Hannibal said.

“Can we stop discussing my moles?” Will snapped.

“Upon examination of all of your body, this mole is the only one with the potentiality be dangerous,” Hannibal frowned.

“You’ve been examining my moles, while were being intimate?” Will asked, brows furrowing.

Bemused, Hannibal lifted Will's hand.

“I examined every facet of your being, took careful detail of all of the intricacies of your body, yes, which has remarkably beautiful features,” to illustrate, Hannibal lovingly turned his hand over and back again, in his.

Will laughed.

“Thank you… I guess…” Will went to pull his hand way so Hannibal clasped his fingers in his.

“You seem opposed to others remarking on your remarkable beauty, why?”

“I’m not opposed… It’s just people don’t tend to…” Will shrugged. “It’s not something that generally comes up in conversation. Did your clients ever talk about *your* handsomeness?”

“Some, who were intent on breaching doctor-patient boundaries did discuss my physical appearance, yes.”

“What did they say?” Will asked, intrigue colouring his comely features.

“It was always in the context of an ill-advised attempt at seduction, after which, I, of course, no longer could see them as patients,” he let go of Will’s hand, and traced a finger over the mole. “May I cut this mole out, Will?”

“If you must…” Will sighed.

“Thank you,” Hannibal said and kissed his warm flesh to the left of the blemish.

As he drew back, Will stroked his cheek with the back of his fingers.

“Don’t eat it,” his murder partner grinned.

*

Will sat in the computer chair by the cluttered desk, the sunlight from the open window sparkling in his hair, highlighting his refined facial features. Hannibal stood in the doorway, holding two coffee mugs, and visualising Will in a yacht on the ocean, the calm waters reflected in his intelligent pale blue irises. As always, his attention was always drawn to his Will first, before moving to what was occupying him. The computer screen opposite his partner displayed a news website, with the headline reading ‘Judy Gnarles’ Suspected Killer Free on Bail.’

Interesting post-breakfast reading, my Will.

As Hannibal stepped into the room, Will spun around in his chair, gracing him with a wide smile.

“Still researching?” Hannibal asked, placing the mugs down on the desk, mindful of the sheafs of papers detailing various printed newspaper articles.

Will reached up and pulled him in, for a warm, firm kiss, his tongue tasting of coffee and the honeyed oats he’d had for breakfast. The fruity scent of his hair post-wash thrilled Hannibal’s nasal passages, his dark curls as silken cloth through Hannibal's tender fingers.

They released and Hannibal grabbed a second chair and sat beside him. They had been at Bedelia’s a week and Hannibal was impressed with how easily the three had developed a comfortable rapport and routine. Bedelia kept mainly to herself, utilising Hannibal’s morphine to further distance herself from her uninvited guests. Hannibal wasn’t bothered. If Bedelia wanted to zone out in such a fashion, it was her choice. Shame for the mind of such a prominent psychiatrist to be so decimated, however.

Will rifled through the papers spread out on the desk, and pulled out one bearing an article with a crude picture of a man wearing a top hat advancing on a cowering woman in nineteenth-century garb. The headline read “Madman Stalks London”. The newspaper article was dated 1888.

“Jack the Ripper… the first serial killer, Hannibal. An appropriate place for us to settle down.”

Hannibal pulled his shirt across, and lightly bit him on the shoulder next to the scar from where he'd removed the mole, two weeks before. Will now had a scar on one side of his shoulder from the mole and a scar on the other, from where he'd been stabbed, as well as bruises from Hannibal's love bites; two on his neck, one on his stomach and one on the back of his left thigh. Hannibal, himself, bore a particularly vicious bruise on his own neck, to the immediate left of his adam's apple, as well as on his left hip, courtesy of Will's enthusiasm the night before.

"What article is this?" Hannibal asked, placing his chin on Will's shoulder and gesturing with his finger towards the computer screen.

"I've been looking at crimes, placing my head back in the game, as such. When we go there, you will help me… But I believe it won't take much this time for me to get back into it. Now I'm willing."

A delicious charge powered through Hannibal at Will's enthusiasm.

Yes, my Will. We will hunt again together. Soon.

"So, you're keen on London," Hannibal said.

"I wanted to be an actor as a child…" Will murmured. "As you know, I grew up poor… I guess the idea of fame, wealth…getting away from my circumstances…"

"With your empathy, you would have been an incredibly gifted actor, had you perused that vocation," Hannibal said, kissing him on the side of his neck.

"Not to brag, but my English accent is more than passable." Will switched his accent to upper English. As he worked the upper received pronunciation of his next sentences, Hannibal realised he was giving no imitation. Indeed, Will could walk into a pub in London and none would be the wiser. He had also, as usual, downplayed his immense talent. "I could pose as an English gentleman. We would, of course have to make up a past for me. Nothing too complex."

"Remarkable, Will."

"Yes, my English is passable," he said, switching to the classic upper English intonation. "My French, not so much," he said and laughed, as he switched to an accent Pepe Le Peu would be proud of. "My Spanish…" He continued to giggle, enjoying himself. Hannibal laughed along with him.

"Where did you learn that?"

"In Louisiana, I had a best friend from York…" Will switched back to his natural south-eastern American. "Moved away when we were ten. I used to copy his intonations," Will shrugged. "Guessed I never lost it."

"If you wish us to travel to the origin of the most famous serial killer of all time, we will go there, Will," Hannibal said.

“Maybe I’ll solve it,” Will said.

“Maybe you will,” Hannibal said, kissing his earlobe.

*

Hannibal was enthralled with how much he could get done with a working computer and the internet. Since Will’s insistence on where they would depart to, Hannibal had been in a working frenzy, organising passports and documentation. Disappearing off the grid and reappearing with a new identity was easy, if one was cognisant of what to do and how to avoid any inherent pitfalls.

Will’s new identity would be Clarence Ainsly, an appropriate English name, with an appropriate past. Clarence was born to an English professor and homemaker and had moved to the United States at the age of fifteen, after his mother died of cancer and his father perished in a motor vehicle accident a year later. Deciding to keep with his former job, Hannibal faked credentials of him as a forensic psychology professor in a small-town university in Arizona.

His own new identity was Lukas Ainsly, husband to Clarence. Both had met at the university campus, where Lukas had scandalously been Clarence's mentor. They did not become involved until after Lukas left the university. Lukas's parents were also deceased and neither had any siblings.

He would have to wait another week for their visas to come through but this was of no concern for him. In two weeks, they would be free of the confines of their injuries and circumstance. Once they had settled down and found a place to live in London, Hannibal would take Will to a crime scene, where they would work together, to discover the guilty culprit.

The hunt would then begin.

Hannibal’s innards tingled at the bloody concept and crotch of his trousers suddenly became too tight.

Switching off the computer, he vowed to find Will, tie him face down on their bed and take him, hard and fast, until he screamed out Hannibal’s name, in orgasm.

Will wasn’t in the bedroom, nor the lounge, nor the kitchen. Upon further inspection, Will wasn’t in any rooms of the house; not even in the garage, where the motorcycle he had pilfered from the neighbours two doors down, under cover of moonlight, sat idling and ready. Bedelia, lounging and drugged in her wheelchair by her bedroom window, announced she didn’t know where Will was.

His heart clenching, Hannibal rushed through the house to the front, drawing the chain and peering out the front door.

No, he wouldn’t. Not after everything that has happened.

His cruel mind reminded him of Bedelia's words to him their first dinner together in the house.

"He will leave you, as soon as he is able."

With his heart pounding so hard it was about to gallop out of his chest, Hannibal rushed to the back door, the one place he hadn't checked.

Please, Will. Please please…

Will's curly haired head was visible at the edge of the back porch. Exhaling his relief, Hannibal opened the door and stepped out.

"Will, what are you-?" He stopped, upon seeing what Will held in his arms.

The dog's fur was matted with blood from its slashed throat, its eyes glazed and staring up at him, in death. Hannibal came over and sat beside the slighter man. Will turned to him, his face blotchy with tears.

"Did you do this?" He asked, his voice cracking.

"No," Hannibal said.

Will's keen blue eyes travelled over Hannibal's features, searching for a reason to distrust his answer, before accepting he was telling the truth. "I believe you. There can only be one other. Bedelia."

"I'm sorry, Will," Hannibal still couldn't comprehend precisely why this dog held such value to Will. However, the fact it did, meant he could draw sympathy for Will's sorrow.

"No, you're not," Will said, his grim smile at odds with the water splashing down his cheeks. "You hated the dog as much as she did."

"What would help to achieve closure for you?"

Will stood and wiped down his jeans. "I want to bury her. Will you help me?"

"If that will help."

"Yes, it will help."

"I will find a shovel," Hannibal said, squeezing his shoulder.

*

Will gave the soil one last pat with his shovel and sat down the grass, absently picking up a dandelion from the ground and placing it in his hair, behind his ear. To Hannibal, the action was so quaint, such a reminder of the intricate and quirky nature of his beloved, that the temperature of his abdominal viscera increased at the sight. Sitting behind him, not caring for

the grass dirtying his trousers, Hannibal wrapped an arm around his waist and kissed the back of his neck.

“I want dogs, in London. I want lots of dogs. You don’t exactly love them…” Will said.

“If that is what you want we’ll get them…”

“I don’t want you to do everything for me, Hannibal. What do *you* want?”

“It’s immaterial because I always obtain what I want. I wanted you. I now have you. If I want certain wines or music or… food… I will obtain it.”

The wind’s whistle through the trees was a haunting repose in keeping with the dog’s passing. As though morning its sister canine’s death, the dog from three houses down gave its usual mid-afternoon volley of barking.

“You don’t have to keep…” Will said. “It’s my choice to stay here, with you. You don’t need to bribe me.”

“There is no bribing here, Will. I give you what you want because it’s my pleasure to see you happy.”

Will turned around and crawled onto Hannibal’s lap, cupping his face in his palms. Though Will spent minimal time in the bleak day sun, a light splotch of freckles now ran across his nose. His full pink lips were chapped and the thin pink scar across the top of his forehead peeking out beneath his fringe, as well as the smaller scar to his right cheek, were more prominent in the bright sunlight. What others would call imperfections, to Hannibal added to his beauty; little reminders that his Will was a flesh and blood human and not one of the stone sculptures he had once admired in cultured art galleries.

“Maybe I never left the psychiatric institute. Maybe this is all a delusion,” Will said.

“As long as it’s a happy one.”

“As messed up as this entire situation is, yes, I am. Running away with a serial killer,” he laughed. “Is the happiest I’ve been my entire life.”

Hannibal ceased Will’s ensuing laughter with his tongue.

*

Hannibal thrust harder into Will’s accommodating body, the bed frame slamming so hard against the wall, the crack in the plaster from their previous lovemaking widened.

“Hannibal…” Will flung his head back, his mouth gaping, as his come spilled onto Hannibal’s stroking hand. Allowing himself to let go, Hannibal thrust deep inside him, crying out in ecstasy, as he released his come inside his willing partner. Collapsing onto his back, Hannibal sucked on the scar of his shoulder where the knife had gone in, as post orgasmic tremors still rocked his body.

“Damn it, Hannibal…” Will said, still panting. “I’ll give that one a high distinction.”

“But still with room to improve next time, right?” Hannibal whacked him on his right buttock and undid the handcuffs and chains tying his arms to the headboard.

As Hannibal moved off him to a seated position, Will also sat up, frowning and touching the intimate bodily area Hannibal had just penetrated.

“Are you okay?” Hannibal asked, watching his semen run down Will’s inner thigh and resisting the urge to lick it dry.

“A bit more sore than usual. We went at it pretty hard.”

“Do you want me to have a look?” Soothing the orifice with loving kisses and licks would be beneficial to Will… as well as himself.

“Having my lover examine me back there in a doctorly fashion would be the highlight of my night,” Will said, with his typical wry tone. “I’m okay. I’m not bleeding or bruised. I’ll be fine. At least this time I was *consenting* to you making me a tad sore, unlike the time you stabbed me, or shoved a damned tube down my throat, with an ear in it, which, to be honest made me *more* than sore. Excruciatingly painful would be more the correct term, once the shock wore off. Did you enjoy stabbing me?”

Hannibal saw no benefit in lying.

“To the extent it soothed my broken heart, yes. From my perspective, you had betrayed me. I enjoyed hurting you, as you had hurt me. Quid quo pro. With my desperation at the time, I de-evolved to the most basic of revenges. Physically stabbing you for the emotional stab you had given me. It was without elegance or maturity. For that, I apologise.”

Will nodded. “I already know all this but it’s good to hear you say it. As well as your apology. And the ear? Because to be honest, Hannibal, when I finally remembered, it was though I’d been violated. Technically, you did violate me.”

“Beyond the mere thrill of setting you up, being that close to you, engaging in such intimacy with you in such a vulnerable position… I enjoyed it. Of course I did.”

Will’s fist flew out and smashed into Hannibal’s cheek, driving him off the bed.

“I deserved that and more,” Hannibal said, lifting himself to a sitting position and examining the bruising flesh with his finger pads, as Will jumped off the other side and shoved on his jeans and t-shirt, from where he’d tossed them onto ground, twenty minutes before. “But I vowed never to lie to you.”

Will zipped up his jeans and dropped his head, his exhale loud through his nose.

“No, you didn’t lie. And your answer wasn’t even a shock, for me.” He looked up, face set in such a vulnerable expression that the armour Hannibal had built around his soul chipped away another piece.

What this man does to me…

"Would you enjoy hurting me now?" Will asked.

"I would now prefer those beautiful facial features to be alight with pleasure and good humour over pain and anguish. Of happenstance for us both the latter is, of late, a rare occurrence."

"You really love me that much?" Will's disbelief was evident in his grimace. "To overcome your need to hurt and manipulate?"

"I do," Hannibal said. "Your disbelief comes from the notion that a psychopath as me doesn't not have the facilities to feel any positive emotion towards another. I also believed such a fallacy as for me it rang true. With you, this changed. You have always known me to be a new type of psychopath. I am. A psychopath who fell in love and didn't deal with his new emotions in the most therapeutic fashion."

"I guess I didn't either," Will sat down on the bed next to him, trailing a light finger up and down the bare skin of Hannibal's thigh. "Falling for a psychopath… I always had to be so *different* to everyone else…"

Hannibal grabbed his hand and held it, kissing his temple.

"And I am grateful for it."

"Get dressed," Will said. "I want to go talk to Bedelia. She killed my fucking dog."

*

Bedelia sat in her usual place; in her wheelchair, staring out her bedroom window.

"Hello Will, Hannibal," she said, as both entered her room, with an even tone.

Her eyes didn't hold their medicated shine that day, instead a lively intelligence displayed in the pale irises.

"Did you kill Missy?" Will asked.

Bedelia nodded. "I did. I baited the dog with my own meat and when it came near I cut its throat."

"Why?" Will asked. Hannibal expected him to be tearful but his eyes remained clear.

"You know why. Because you brought that mutt into my house, which now smells of dog, despite Hannibal's almost obsessive cleaning and scrubbing."

Hannibal walked behind her and placed a hand around her throat.

"Do you wish to take back that promise not to kill her, Will?"

Bedelia didn't move, didn't gasp or struggle.

She wants this.

Hannibal held no loyalty to his former psychiatrist. If Will assented, he would break her neck and give her nary another parting thought. In his partner's vulpine expression, Hannibal read a fleeting need to revenge the death of his dog, in the most brutal fashion.

Yes, my Will. Say the words.

But then the dark emotion fled Will's opaque irises and he shook his head.

"No, Hannibal. Let her go."

Nodding, Hannibal released her throat.

"I wish you would," Bedelia said. "I don't have the strength to do it myself."

"This wasn't what we wanted for you," Will said, with a distraught tone.

"Not you, Will but Hannibal, yes," Bedelia said, turning her head back to the window, to signal they were being dismissed.

"In Will's mercy, you are alive. And continue to be," Hannibal said. "You make the choice what to do with this gift."

He came over to Will and placed a hand on his shoulder before ushering him out the room.

*

On Bedelia's wide screen television, Bart Simpson was making a prank call to Moe Syzlack. For the fifth time in the episode, Will burst out laughing. Hannibal's attention was more focused on his partner than the screen, a bemused smirk lighting up his handsome face.

He's laughed more this one night than the entire first year of my acquaintance.

Will continued with giggles and rested his head on Hannibal's shoulder, as Hannibal tightened his arm around his shoulders.

"You could have had more fun with our new names. Mike Rotch…" Will giggled.

"So unsophisticated, Will," Hannibal said, causing Will's laughter to reach a higher tempo.

Bedelia rolled into the room in her wheelchair. Will fell silent, in recognition that this was the first time in three days they had seen her, since their confrontation. Hannibal studied her for any hint of intoxication and curiously found none. Her stance was upright, eyes bright, not enveloped by their usual drug haze.

"It's been a long time since I've sat and enjoyed the pleasures of television," Bedelia said, wheeling over to sit beside the two men.

Will picked up the remote from the table opposite her and handed it towards her. She shook her head.

“This programme will do fine.”

*

“We head south to Buenos Aires, stay there another week and take a plane from there to London,” Hannibal said, stroking the bare flesh of Will’s stomach.

“Imagine me solving the case of the most famous serial killer of all time,” Will said, switching to his English accent, as he buttoned up his shirt. “That would give the press a *ripping* old time.”

“Impressed with yourself?” Hannibal said. “What an appalling pun. And I thought you were the *Jack* of all trades.”

“That’s worse!” Will laughed, momentarily switching back to American and whacking Hannibal on his bare chest. “Come on, Hannibal, you are more eloquent and *cutting* than that!”

Hannibal rolled up the sleeve of his shirt and kissed around the bruises on his now healed wrist, from where the handcuffs had cut into his flesh. He had identical bruises around his own wrists, from the ecstasy the night before, where, in their prolonged lovemaking session, Will had handcuffed him to the bed and rode his erection until he was certain their cries would awaken the barking dogs three houses over.

“The press will *cannibalise* each other,” Will switched to the English accent again, his lovely visage alight with good humour, as he pulled on his boxers and jeans. “When you amputated Bedelia’s leg, you could say she was *appealing*… as in we peeled the flesh right off her bone.”

Hannibal laughed. “Will,’ he said, shoving his jumper over his head. “You are a beautiful, intelligent, complex individual. Your puns… no so much.”

Will’s mouth gaped in a mock expression of disgust, as he shoved his socks and loafers on. “You’re jealous you can’t make such amazing puns as mine.” He pecked Hannibal on the lips and rose off the bed. Hannibal zipped up his trousers and stepped off with him.

As Hannibal put on his shoes and socks, Will came over to the door and picked up one of their bags, handing it to his partner.

“Admit it. I am the King of the Terrible Puns,” he said, picking up his other bag.

“No,” Hannibal said.

“Such a *cutting* remark,” Hannibal,” Will said switching back to upper English, as they stepped out of the room and walked down the adjacent corridor. “You *kill* me.”

“I tried,” Hannibal said. “Fortunate I didn’t succeed.”

“No, I technically succeeded by throwing us both off a cliff,” there was only good humour still in Will’s voice, as they came into the lounge, where Bedelia sat, wheelchair facing the open blinds of the front window.

“Your plane leaves in three hours. Will give you plenty of time,” Bedelia said.

“Yes, it would, if we were going to take that flight,” Hannibal said. “I have made other plans.”

Bedelia’s face twitch, before settling on its usual haughty composure, told him all he needed.

“You’ve betrayed us, haven’t you?” Will asked.

Hannibal hadn’t discussed with Will why they had diverted the plans to go south to Argentina first. There was no need, with a partner as brilliant as Will.

“It’s already too late for either of you,” Bedelia said.

Both dropped the cases. Hannibal had hoped to take valuables with them, however, had also prepared for this eventuality, which, with his knowledge of Bedelia, was certain. Rushing out of the room, they circumvented the house to the garage. Once inside, Will clicked the remote for the garage door, before Hannibal threw him the spare helmet.

The garage door opened, as Hannibal sat on the motorcycle and Will climbed on behind him, hands tight around his waist. They zoomed out, to a car pulling into the driveway.

“Wait, stop!” Will shouted.

The motorcycle skidded to a stop a metre from the car’s driver’s door. Will took off his helmet, as a familiar figure stepped out.

“Jack Crawford!” Hannibal said, taking off his own helmet. “Wonderful to see you again.”

Will jumped off the bike and accepted Jack’s embrace.

“Knew you were alive, Will,” Jack said. “Damn, don’t do that to me again.”

Will pulled away and jumped back on the motorcycle, behind Hannibal.

“Don’t do this, Will,” Jack said. In the background, sirens sounded. “This isn’t you.”

“I’m sorry, Jack,” Will said, tightening his hold around Hannibal’s waist.

“I’ll come after you, you know I will. He’ll hurt you, kill you in the end. That’s who he is,” Jack said. “I intend to save you, Will.”

“I don’t need saving. I’m not here out of fear. I’m right where I intend to be.”

“I will never hurt him, Jack. Not any more. You have my word,” Hannibal snapped his helmet back into place and closed the visor. “I won’t make guarantees of others, including

yourself.”

Will snapped his own helmet on and, as the motorcycle zoomed out of the driveway, Jack’s voice rang out.

“I will find you, Hannibal!”

But Jack, Bedelia and the sirens were soon a blot in the distance, away from their motorcycle heading south.

Tbc…

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

> Thanks to all who are reading. Hoping to finish this up next chapter. :)
> Warning in this chapter for extreme violence, mentions of child murder and child abuse as related to a case, as well as a bout of very rough consensual Hannigram sex.

Even when yawning, his right hand covering his mouth, Will retained a dainty manner. The customs line trudged forward with mechanical precision, and Hannibal lowered his head, to whisper in his partner's ear.

"My poor Will, did you sleep at all, on the flight over?"

"I'll be fine," Will snapped.

Hannibal recognised his irritated tone to be code for his murder partner's true fatigue.

In the thirteen-hour flight from Buenos Aires, Will had entertained himself with reading and watching the blockbuster movies the entertainment package offered. At one point, Hannibal glanced over at the tiny screen in front of Will's seat, to view a man jumping down a building from an explosion that would have burnt him to a crisp, thus rendering him unable to steroid-muscle his way out of the next ridiculous action scene. Flicking through the philosophical novel he had picked up from the airport newsagent, Hannibal had discarded the book after deciding the central concept was ridiculous. With the knowledge he had another twelve hours to entertain himself, Hannibal had then enjoyed a dry martini and rested a while, thankfully coming to as the captain's voice over the loudspeaker advised passengers to return to their seats, as the plane was landing.

"Did I ever tell you how innocent you appear when you're asleep?" Will asked, as they shuffled forward another three steps.

Hannibal raised a brow. "No."

"Ironic a man of such… taste as yours can look so innocent in sleep…" Will's lips flicked upwards.

The line continued forward. They were nearing the front now.

"You remember…" Hannibal said, concerned Will's current tiredness would affect his memory.

"I'm no idiot. Oddly enough," Will said.

“No, you’re not. But fatigue affects cognition-“

“Again, I’m no idiot! I know this!” Will whispered, a line deepening in his forehead as he pouted in such an adorable fashion that Hannibal bit the inside of his cheeks to keep from grinning.

They reached the front of the line and flicked out their passports to the woman behind the customs counter.

“Reason for coming into the United Kingdom?” The customs official asked.

“I was born here,” Will said, sporting his flawless English accent. “Haven’t come back in fifteen years. Have returned to find work.”

The woman peered up from his documentation, her mistrust clear in her grey irises.

“This er… is my partner… husband….” Will stammered, continuing with the accent, sweat appearing on his upper lip.

“Where do you plan to live, while you’re ‘looking for work’? You’ve listed here the ‘Langham Hotel.’”

“We don’t plan to live there long….”

Observing Will flail, Hannibal stepped forward, scanning the woman for something to use to charm her.

“The Saint Christopher medallion, patron saint of travellers and a fitting piece of jewellery for your work,” Hannibal gestured to the pendant hanging from a gold chain around her neck. As he spoke to her, her eyes flicked to him, a pink flush gracing her cheeks, as she rested a hand over the necklace. “Although may I be so bold as to say you wear it as a homage to god, blessed he may be.”

The flush grew to a dull red, her wide smile revealing yellow teeth. Hannibal intuited he could push her more, to his charms, as he set his passport down on the desk before her.

“I’m sorry, I’ve overstepped boundaries. I merely wanted to compliment you on your beautiful necklace.”

“No, no it’s fine,” the woman flicked through Will’s passport and stamped it.

“May I be so impish as to add, though you don’t wear it as adornment, it still highlights your natural good looks,” Hannibal continued.

The woman, who Hannibal didn’t find the least attractive, giggled.

“You’re quite the charmer, aren’t you?” She stamped his passport and waved them through.

Will waited until they were far past customs to pass him an exasperated glance.

“Really, Hannibal?”

“Her narcissism was obvious, I merely played to it,” Hannibal shrugged.

“Of course you did,” Will shook his head.

*

“Many guests have reported strange phenomena in this hotel,” the porter said, his feet tapping on the varnished floorboards, as he moved down the vast corridor with Hannibal and Will following.

“Perhaps we should have requested this room three three three,” Hannibal said. “A test of whether this apparition would appear for us.”

Trailing behind, Will’s incredulous snort was obvious.

“Excuse my partner. He finds such matters trifling,” Hannibal said, reaching back and playfully swatting Will on his chest.

“Most do until it happens to them,” the porter said.

“Ghosts don’t exist,” Will said, his tone blunt.

“That’s what people always say until they come across one,” the porter reached the door marked 404 and pressed the key card to the panel on the wall, before walking inside.

The carpet, which ran from the antique mahogany lounge and Queen Anne writing desk of the front part of the suite, was imprinted with interlocking red roses, matching the fresh flowers set in vases on the Georgian bedside tables. The king-sized bed before red velvet curtains bore simple white sheets and blankets. A crystal chandelier added extra opulence.

“I’m sure they do,” Will said, as the porter placed their cases on the bed. “Doesn’t mean what they’re seeing is real.”

The porter turned to Hannibal, his nose wrinkling in obvious irritation.

“As Hamlet said ‘There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy',” Hannibal said, offering the porter his most charming of smiles.

“Exactly,” the porter again glanced at Will, before nodding at Hannibal and exiting the room, closing the door behind him.

“Why didn’t you allow the man his fancies?” Hannibal asked, as Will, with a grumpy expression twisting his genial features, shoved both cases to the ground and flopped face forward onto the bed. “For you to react with such vehemence against him suggests you are feeling defensive.”

“I’m just tired. You know I get grumpy when I get tired.”

“Will…” Hannibal lowered his voice. “Tiredness is no excuse for rudeness. The man was in no way being offensive or rude and yet you berated him.”

Will sat up and gave the courtesy of averting his eyes, as he ran an absent hand through his hair. “You’re right. I’m sorry. Damn, I feel bad now…”

Remorse and guilt, even for an action as subtle as Will’s mocking of the bellhop, were emotions Hannibal did not have the capacity to experience, except in regards to Will, himself. He had learned, from an early age, that to fake such emotions was necessary for cohesion in society. However, he was, as ever, fascinated to see another display such a level of empathy towards another.

“I guess I was annoyed,” Will said. “You charmed the customs lady, you charmed the woman behind the counter, the taxi driver, even the bell hop. And I was my usual socially awkward klutz.”

“I charmed these people because it was to our advantage for them to like us. Yes, there is a level of social awkwardness to you, Will, but with me as your partner, there is no need for you to not have anything you want. I will guarantee it.”

“I bet they were all wondering what a charming, handsome smart and sophisticated man as yourself is doing with me,” Will dropped his hand and folded it within the other.

Interesting…

Hannibal had never before considered that Will may be insecure in regards to this aspect of their relationship. As with all insecurities, this was not based on reality, nor made any sense. Will was being ridiculous, and Hannibal refused to pander to him. Instead, he picked up his case off the floor and sat it back on the bed beside Will, opening it and removing his clothes, to fold and place in the mahogany chest of drawers sitting opposite.

“Why should I care what they think?” Will murmured.

“Yes, why should you?” Hannibal asked, turning from where he’d shoved a folded-up pair of socks in the top drawer. “They don’t know the truth of me or of you. What they saw was an image I projected for them.”

“No, not entirely,” Will said. “The sophistication and charm you weave is as much a part of you as the darker aspects of your personality.”

“Just as your good-humoured sweetness is just as much a part of yours,” Hannibal returned to the case and took more clothes out, opening the wardrobe to hang his suits on hangers.

“I don’t know why I said that. I must be tired.”

“Partially. But also, this flight from the authorities of ours has brought to the surface your insecurities, which are being masked as envy of my good humour with others today.” Hannibal sat beside him and placed an arm around his shoulder, dropping his face into his

curls. “Your insecurities of whether you have done the right thing are understandable but are not warranted. It will be fine, Will, you’ll see.”

Will kicked the case off the bed once more, spilling the rest of Hannibal’s clothes to the floor. The naughty grin alighting Will’s beatific features was enough to vanquish any irritation from his partner, for his clumsy act.

“I have done the right thing, I know,” Will said, hooking his leg around Hannibal’s waist and dragging him down for a leisurely, tongue exploring kiss. “How about you fuck me over that vintage desk in the front room… or would that offend those delicate sensibilities of yours?”

“Absolutely. And they would be more offended if I tied you to the desk first….” Hannibal sat up. “I believe the lube is in the toiletries bag you so inelegantly just threw onto the ground.”

*

Will’s jeep rolled up to their secluded villa just as Hannibal placed their entrée for that night in the fridge. Washing his hands in the sink, he crossed their mosaic kitchen tiles and continued through the lounge to the foyer, arriving at the front door as his partner stepped through.

“I’ve got a good shot of getting the job, thanks to you,” Will said, taking off his coat and hanging it on the nearby coat stand.

In comprehension of his partner’s social anxiety (Hannibal was aware that even before he met Will, the young profiler had been given the job at Quantico because he had been recommended by Jack Crawford), Hannibal had coached him the night before his interview at the university, providing him with the best answers to questions to memorise and practising with him correct eye contact and body posture.

Will unwound his scarf from around his neck and placed it over his hanging coat. The effort he’d made to tame his curls that morning was for naught, as the curling strands had broken free to twist and turn of their own accord. Hannibal’s fingers itched to trail through the resultant mess.

“You’re more than welcome,” Hannibal drew him into a warm embrace and firm kiss, satiating his fingers in his soft hair. Coffee and donuts, along with the essence of Will, himself, delighted his tastebuds, as the scent of the Christian Dior aftershave he’d gifted Will the day before filled his nasal passages. “So,” he said as they pulled away, “Was the interviewer male or female?”

“Female.”

“That increases your chances of becoming the next forensics professor for Bristol University. We pretend we live in a world where the most skilled candidate obtains the position. This isn’t true. Your beauty would not have gone unnoticed by the interviewer.”

Will bent his neck and gazed up at him, in his typical mocking ‘Whatever you say, Hannibal’ gesture.

“I’m going to have a shower and go down by the river. Need to meditate, force the questions about my fake resume out of my mind,” Will walked towards the corridor separating the lounge from the rest of the villa.

“I will continue dinner. Tonight, we are having honey soy pork.”

Will stopped moving and stood still a moment, before turning back to face Hannibal.

“Crazy that I feel bad you haven’t been able to partake in your favourite meat yet.”

“It was more important for us to obtain necessities first; part-time employment for you, and a house we both agreed on, before we hunt.”

Will hadn’t asked why Hannibal was insistent on him only obtaining part-time employment. To Hannibal, the reason was obvious. Even in the few hours Will would be at work, Hannibal would be forced to endure a pained yearning for his partner’s effervescent presence. Upon rescuing Will from the cliff fall, he had kept to his vow to keep his murder partner with him, to not bear any separation more than was necessary, to retain their cover.

“I know…” Will said. “Although I have noticed how much we’ve achieved in the ten days since arriving in London. Phenomenal, really. Buying a car, finding the perfect secluded house off the Boyd River for us to live in. You’re in a rush to get hunting, admit it.”

“Yes and no. I am willing to wait, until we find the perfect victim. Now we are secure in our fake lives, our real ones will flourish.”

“You mean giving in to our dark compulsions?” Will said, eyes twinkling.

Hannibal closed the distance between them and ran a hand through his dark curls, deliberate in messing them up, before trailing his fingers along the scar on his right cheek.

Dolarhyde bequeathed him that scar. I will always have him to thank, for being the one to ultimately bring Will to me.

“When we do, it will be as beautiful as you are, if not more so.”

“That was oddly romantic, for you,” Will said and brushed his lips against Hannibal’s.

*

Will’s wiry frame was stock still, his eyes closed. Hannibal stood two metres behind, closer to the thick undergrowth, not daring to move, allowing Will this time, to come to the answers of his own accord. The night was silent, in alignment with his partner’s contemplations, as though the night animals were in agreeance with Hannibal’s urgent desires to aurally drink in Will’s every revelation.

“I need to fulfil my dark compulsion. Once I am finished with the boy,” Will knelt down, touching the muddy ground, caressing an invisible victim. “I tell him not to cry…. No, this is meant to be… I’m always so calm after I’ve fulfilled my twisted desires. Sated. This is my design. But, with this one…there’s still so much rage.” Will lifted his fist and slammed it into

the ground over and over again. “I need to punish. The anger… the frustration. He needs to know… they all need to know…” He bent his head, his curls flopping forward.

“Who needs to know, Will?” Hannibal knelt beside him.

Yes, my Will. You’re almost there.

“This boy… Jamie…There were other victims, we know this…A predator of his caliber on average goes through hundreds of victims before he is caught. But this was the first one he lost control over. There was something special about this one…”

“The police believe he antagonised the perpetrator. But that’s not true is it?” Hannibal said.

“No, this isn’t about Jamie… not entirely…” Will stood up and brushed down his knees, peering around himself, at the lush undergrowth and tall elms surrounding them. “Jamie’s family… his mother and grandmother both committed suicide. Father and grandfather battled for custody…”

“Yes Will,” Hannibal prompted.

“The father being an alcoholic… The grandfather… A pillar of society. Well-liked, easy smile…The press conference… the grandfather was saying the right things…The grandmother knew, covered for him. But it became too much for her. Same with the mother. He would have been abusing the boy for years, as he moved onto other children. His own grandchild…” Will rubbed his temples with his thumbs.

“The stabbing. Thirty-two times. Signifies rage,” Hannibal said.

Will lowered his hands, folding them primly against his stomach and stared down at the ground.

“Jamie had turned thirteen. Was growing tall. Maybe he was deciding he could no longer put up with the abuse. That would have been enough to enrage the grandfather.”

“There would be proof of his crimes,” Hannibal said. “Mementos of the ones he harmed.”

Will didn’t answer, continued to focus on the muddy earth.

“Will?”

“It’s times like this that having such extreme empathy…” Will looked up, allowing Hannibal to witness the tears streaming down his cheeks. “I don’t want to feel this… I don’t want to feel what that sick and twisted…When it’s a child it’s so…It’s so wrong.”

Without hesitation, Hannibal pulled him into his embrace, stroking his soft hair, arms strong around his back. The abuse of children was always deemed as more horrific, in society, than an adult. Hannibal understood why. They had not the capacity to make an informed decision, had not been alive for long enough, were still dependant on those older. Thus, a child’s death appealed to the sense of unfairness, in adults.

“You’ll never understand why I’m even crying…” Will said.

“No, not on an emotional level but intellectually, yes, I understand why…And I understand your need for vengeance on this man.”
*

Dressed head to toe in protective plastic, Hannibal thumped along the wall behind the television, checking for a hollow sound indicating a potential secret compartment, while an equally plastic covered Will searched through the bookcase that covered the entirety of the left side of the room.

“This trophy, pretty high up, wouldn’t you say?” Will pointed to a gold trophy a good half a metre above his head.

Before Hannibal could answer, Will grabbed a chair nearby and stood on it, reaching for the golden object.

“State Hockey Championships 1934. It’s heavy.”

“Careful, Will,” Hannibal said, moving over to stand behind him in case, in his enthusiasm, his partner fell backwards off the chair.

“Why can’t I pick this-?” Will grunted, the muscles on his arms straining, from lifting the trophy. A flap opened on the shelf behind, leading to another hidden compartment. Will reached inside and pulled out a thin black booklet. Jumping off the chair, Will held the diary up, with a wide grin.

“This is the evidence we need.”

Hannibal came and looked over his shoulder, as he opened the tiny booklet. Inside, amongst the scribblings, were cuttings of hair, of all shades and types.

“Got you…” Will murmured.

*

Will had been sceptical the typed correspondance sent to their culprit would garner the result they wished for. Along with the letter, detailing where to meet for a ‘ransom’, they had sent a page of the diary, along with a cutting of hair. The culprit would not come alone, he reasoned, or would give the letter to the police.

Hannibal, who held a comprehension of the killer’s mindset even better than Will, in all of his empathy, knew better. The killer would come. There would be no other outcome.

“He won’t come,” Will said, treading forward to stand in the same spot the body had lain, the week before.

“Patience, my Will,” Hannibal said, taking his hand in his.

Footsteps sounded and Will's grip tightened. The man emerging from between two beech trees had lost the distinct dignified air present in his press conference. Now, his clothes were rumpled and dirty, his grey hair long and flapping in the light breeze, revealing a large bald spot.

"Mr. Chester Scotchman, I believe?" Hannibal said.

Chester's small grey eyes widened as they travelled up and down the forms of the two men before him, taking in their plastic apparel.

"Who are you people? What do you want with me?" His voice was scratchy and raw.

"Admittance of guilt," Will stepped forward. "Admit you were the one who assaulted and murdered your grandson, Jamie."

"How dare you! I loved my grandson! I-"

"You did it," Will's voice was soft, sensuous. Hannibal's lower abdomen gurgled with pleasure, at the sound. "Admit it."

"I…" Chester hiccupped, his chest shaking, as his breath rattled.

"We have the diary, Chester," Will whispered.

"I never meant to…I loved him…"

Will rested a hand on his shoulder. "It's okay."

"It was an accident, I swear. He… he hit me… and I…Next thing I know, he's on the ground and the knife is in my hand and…I loved him… He was accusing me of such terrible things."

"It's okay…" Will took out the knife he had been hiding behind his back, placed it against Chester's throat and slashed deep, his mouth open in an expression of pure ecstasy, as the blood from the severed carotid artery spilled onto his head and the plastic covering him.

The blood drenching his face and curls appeared black in the pale moonlight. To Hannibal, he was beyond angelic in that moment, elevated to a higher form of supreme being, one he would sink to his knees and worship, for the chance of one touch of his bloodied cheek.

As Chester slipped to his knees, gurgling, attempting to hold closed his gaping throat wound, Hannibal rushed forward with his own knife, slashing the man's shoulder before slamming the knife into one cheek, then the other. Chester fell forward onto the ground and Hannibal sliced through his spine and then drew Will to him, licking the blood drenching his face, before shoving his tongue into his mouth. Will gyrated against his partner, fingers digging into his back. They fell to their knees together beside the corpse, their need to touch flesh hampered by the plastic covering their bodies.

"I want you, now," Will said. "But that would contaminate this crime scene with our DNA."

“By all that is great and powerful, damn I love you,” Hannibal said, allowing the intense pulse of emotion flooding his system to dictate his words.

Will responded with a knowing smile.

“We go with the plan.”

Hannibal nodded, surprising himself with his need for his murder partner. The intimacy they had shared was beyond any he had experienced; humbling, awe inspiring.

My Will.

My perfect murder partner.

I will give you all that you ask for and more.

“Was it all you had wished for?” Hannibal asked, as he knelt by the corpse.

“There are no words to describe that experience, killing with you. The power. But you saw, Hannibal.”

In Will’s feral intensity, his beauty was so pronounced that Hannibal was tempted to shy away, to hide from one who had violently torn through to his very soul, leaving him scorched open, vulnerable.

“You. Saw.” Will’s irises were so wide his eyes appeared black, in the enveloping darkness.

Hannibal nodded.

“I always have.”

He brought the knife down and sliced through the corpse’s abdomen.

“I will only take the liver. He kept his drinking to a minimum. It should be fine to consume.”

Will knelt beside him, watching him slide the organ out from under the right ribcage and wrap it in more plastic.

“Not as hygienic as I would like but it will do, for our purposes.”

Both stood and Will took out the diary from a pocket enclosed in his plastic coveralls, throwing the item on top of the corpse. For a moment, he stared down, eyes glittering with a cavalcade of dark emotions.

“Right, so next,” Will grabbed Hannibal’s hand. “Bury our plastic coveralls, drive home. Have each other for hours.”

*

Will was silent on the drive home, staring out the window, his magnificent mind working through that night. Hannibal bore him no concern, confident he would come to the conclusion

that the experience was a positive, liberating and bonding one for the both of them.

As soon as Hannibal opened the front door, Will launched himself onto his body, rubbing his erection against his thigh, still tasting of coppery blood and this man, this Chester.

As Chester had marked his victims, so too were they now a part of Will and Hannibal both. To Hannibal, the perpetrator was privileged to have been held in such high regard, by his murderers.

Clothes tore, with buttons popping.

Hannibal bit down hard into Will's left nipple, sucking on the ensuing blood, allowing the metallic liquid down his oesophagus. Will drew back his hand and pistoned it hard against Hannibal's left cheek, before he froze, blue eyes widening. Hannibal grinned back, shoved him forward onto his stomach and ripped his underwear away, before tying his hands with the cloth. Will responded by lurching up with surprising strength and slamming his head back, connecting with Hannibal's jaw and causing his lip to split. Using his knee to hold his partner down, Hannibal wiped his fingers down the blood on Will's face, as well as his own, and shoved the digits inside him, utilising Chester's and his own blood as lube.

"Yes, Hannibal, yes…"

Taking Will's assertions as a sign to move things along, he pulled his partner back up onto his knees and took him, thrusting hard and fast. Will gasped and moaned, thrusting himself into Hannibal's stroking hand. Slamming him face forward to the ground, Hannibal moved deeper inside him, pounding with animal ferocity, needing to conquer, for Will to acknowledge he was his, he belonged to Hannibal. If he could never feel the extent of the love Hannibal felt towards him, he could at least feel his power, his lust.

"Fuck…slow down…" Will said.

Acquiescing, Hannibal slowed his movements, his lips soft against Will's throat. Will squirmed beneath him and Hannibal moved off him, pulling him up to his knees once more, as he continued with his shallow, slow movements.

"Better…Damn, Hannibal, you know I want it rough but I don't enjoy 'potentially needing to go to the hospital' kind of rough," Will's voice shook with passion.

"Do you want me to stop?" Hannibal asked.

"I'm okay…. Actually, yes, you've taken me out of the moment."

Kissing the side of his neck, Hannibal pulled out of him and shuffled back.

"I'm sorry…" Will said.

"Are you hurt?"

"No, I just… I need a shower. I smell of *him*…"

Hannibal untied Will's hands and waited until both had stood before asking the question.

"Is this regret?"

"No…" From Will's raised brows, as he pulled back on his torn shirt, he was surprised by the question. "He had no remorse."

"Nor do I," Hannibal said.

"You do when it comes to me," Will said. "Chester deserves what we did to him. He abused children, murdered a child. If killing him makes me a messed-up angel of mercy, then so be it."

"Others would say every life is precious. Even his. Others would say where will you draw the line?"

Will's upper lip lifted into a half-smirk.

"These mysterious 'others' sound as though they are full of the very thing that emptied from Chester's bowels when I drove the knife into his neck."

Hannibal tittered with amusement.

"Anyway, shower."

Forgoing his jeans and torn underwear, Will moved away from him through the lounge, his ass pert under the torn shirt.

"Will…I'm sorry…" Hannibal said.

Will turned back, his comely features both widened and creased in an expression of bewilderment.

"I told you to stop and you did, it's fine."

"I shouldn't have been that rough to begin with."

Will moved back towards him, in a slinky fashion. Hannibal was always impressed by his ability to be both sensual and vulnerable at the same time.

"We're always rough with our intimacy. Because I want it that way," Will traced circular patterns down Hannibal's bare chest. "The penetration started to sting a little too much in the 'this is no longer fun' way, but then you slowed down when I asked you to."

Will's face; the blue eyes, always convoluted with emotion, a glimpse into the depth of his magnificent mind, the splatter of light freckles across his nose, the brow so often furrowed in concentration, the scars on his cheek and forehead courtesy of his dealings with the men he so longed to share the darkness of, the mouth so quick with a wry retort, or to demonstrate his intellectual prowess or stunning empathy. Hannibal had memorised every line, every bristle, every curve and yet every time he gazed upon him, it was as though he was seeing him anew.

“Being here, with you. It’s an agony I have never abided by before…Any attempt to assuage my agony came to naught.”

“You mean trying to eat my brain?” Will said, with a wry tone.

“Killing together, that is the time I come closest to ceasing my eternal need for you, yearning to be a part of you, to own you. For you to own me.”

“You are such a romantic,” Will said, his amusement dancing in his blue irises.

“This talk is uncomfortable for you, so you disguise your awkwardness with your subtle humour,” Hannibal said.

“What do you want me to say, Hannibal? I’m here now. I killed with you tonight. I give my body, my mind to you.”

“And your love?”

Sparks of anger now fizzled off Will’s diminutive frame.

“Again, why do you think I’m here?” His steady voice was at odds with the fury blazing in his eyes.

“You will never love me as I do you. I will always be the chaser and you the chased,” Hannibal said.

“Yes, well that will be true for you if you believe it to be true,” Will pulled away, folding his arms. “If you recall I was the damned stupid idiot who chased you in Italy.” He flung his hands up into the air. “I’m not having this conversation any more. Because it’s *ridiculous.* I’m having a shower. You go cook your liver or whatever it is you want to make.”

Will stomped out of the room.

*

“I’m sorry,” Will said, walking into the dining room, as Hannibal lit the last of the tall candles on the dining table.

“There’s no need to apologise. I was in the wrong,” Hannibal said, coming over to ruffle his curls. “It’s impossible for me to know your true emotions when it comes to me, because I am not you, can’t know your consciousness. Therefore, it is arrogant and insulting of me to presume to tell you what you are feeling.”

Will’s eyes were large as his features soft in the glowing candlelight. Hannibal trailed his hand down, to cup his jaw, stroking the mandible bone under his flesh with his thumb.

“I am in love with you, Hannibal. That’s why I’m here. That’s why I stay. Well, that and the great sex.”

Will’s constant mobile facial features were too expressive to tell a lie.

He loves you. Is in love with you. This is more than you ever fantasised he could give you.

"Let me make love to you, before dinner, Hannibal whispered. "Right here on the dining table. I want to kiss you all over your beautiful face, your neck, your limbs, your chest and abdomen, your back, your buttocks. I want every section of flesh against my mouth. Then I want you to come in my mouth, before I come in your lovely curly hair."

Will nodded, his breath hitching, and jumped onto the table.

*

Hannibal stepped into the dark auditorium. The projection screen at the base was stilled on a crime scene photo, the setting a rural strip of road. The body, that of a twentyish man, dumped by the side of the dirt track, was naked, his hands tied by twine, skull decimated by the shotgun blast that had blown off the top of his head. Will stood at the lectern, adorable in his glasses.

"So, empathy is our greatest weapon-"

As Hannibal moved past a row of students, Will caught his eye, his mouth twitching.

"Empathy is our greatest weapon in understanding these crimes, for both the victims," he said, as Hannibal took a desk at the front row. "And perpetrators. Thank you. That will be all for today."

Bags rustling, feet stamping and the chatter of conversation signalled the students' departure from the lecture hall.

"…the husband…" A young woman whispered, as she passed Hannibal.

"…Of course he's as gorgeous as Professor Ainsley," another sounded.

Will gathered papers up into his satchel, as two students approached him.

"…Of course, if we consider the Yorkshire Ripper…" Will continued with his English accent.

The women who had come up to Will were staring at him with rapt attention. Bemused, Hannibal stood up and walked forward.

"…yes, exactly…"

The young woman he was talking to, and her friend, spun around to Hannibal.

"…So I will see you at the next lecture…" Will said to the students.

"Sure," both girls glared at Hannibal and moved away.

"How was work, *honey*?" Hannibal asked.

Will laughed. "Work's fine *sweetie dumpling*."

He picked up his satchel and slung it over his shoulder, switching off the projector.

“You look cute today,” Hannibal said, kissing him under his chin.

“Cuter than when I left you this morning?” Will asked, as they moved towards the exit.

“You are always beautiful my Will. I was simply remarking you look *cute* now.”

“So smooth, Hannibal. You don’t have to compliment me to get me into bed.”

“I was more hoping to get you into the restaurant. I’ve booked a table at Club Gascon for us.”

“That’s one of those swanky three-hat joints?” Will’s full lips downturned. “You want to compare their cuisines with your own?”

Hannibal laughed. “You know me all too well.”

Tbc…

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

Thanks to all who are reading!
Decided to make this the second last chapter and finish with an epilogue.
Enjoy.

Will undid the top button of his shirt and then rebuttoned, before wiping invisible dirt off his pristine jeans, his throat spasming as he swallowed.

“You want me to wait for him to come to me? What if he doesn’t?”

“He will,” Hannibal assured him, drinking in the loveliness of his profile, as Will continued to stare forward, at the bar’s exterior.

“The victims were all at least ten years younger than me.”

“Fortunate, then, that you look years younger than your age. Guaranteed, Will, you will be the prettiest man in there.”

Will turned his head to face him. “Until you come in,” his lips quirked, eyes lustrous in the glow of the overhead streetlight streaming through the windshield.

“He will come to you,” Hannibal said, trailing his finger along his partner’s jawline, his stubble rough under his pad.

Will took a deep breath, pursed his lips and exhaled.

“Alright, here goes nothing.”

With pride for his Will dispersing throughout his being, Hannibal observed him walk through the carpark to the drab grey building, with the neon sign on the roof, showing a flamingo that constituted the name, adding tacky flair. As the only gay bar in a fifty-kilometre radius, Hannibal was aware the patrons were limited in their ability to condemn the atrocity that was the prancing neon bird on the bar’s rooftop. Moreover, a more pressing violent issue plagued the local gay population, than silly signage. In the past three years, ten bodies had been found dumped by the side of the freeway that joined six of the local towns, all displaying signs of suffering horrific torture before their brutal deaths. The serial killer, who was smart, making certain to wipe the bodies of any DNA evidence before disposal, had stumped the local police. They had even brought in Scotland Yard to help with the case.

With his back straight, Will opened the front door and stepped in. As planned, Hannibal looked at his watch and counted down two minutes.

Will had offered to be the bait without any consideration as to the possible dangerous consequences. That his only concern was that the killer wouldn't target him proved to Hannibal not only his Will's bravery, but also his naivety in regards to his own beauty. The victims all favoured the boyish pretty looks that Will possessed.

His Will would once again prove his magnificence, that night. Hannibal had no doubt.

Two minutes had passed. Hannibal clambered out of the car, keeping the doors unlocked for a quick getaway, before crossing the carpark to the entrance and stepping inside the bustling venue. Thankfully, the dim chatter of the crowd drowned out the dreadful country music playing on the jukebox seated in the far-left corner, behind the lively dance floor. A blond man, standing closest the door, ceased talking to his pudgy friend to give Hannibal the obvious once over.

"Well, hello there, handsome…"

Ignoring him, Hannibal searched the room for Will.

Will stood at the bar, with another man on his right chatting to him. Handsome, exuding confidence even from across the room. Not the perpetrator, who both Will and Hannibal had already profiled as not having the confidence to obtain the type of partner he yearned for, and thus took out his rage on them, for what he perceived as their rejection of him.

Hannibal moved through the room to be closer, watching Will's smile at his would-be paramour, before he swivelled back to the barman, angling himself away from the man in an obvious gesture. Yes, this was the Will he loved.

Will forked over the cash and picked up his pint of beer, searching around for a place to sit. His eyes met Hannibal's before sliding past, to a spare table in the corner. On his walk over, he was intercepted by another man, who he pushed past.

My Will is popular.

"A gin and tonic," Hannibal said, walking up to the bar and swivelling back around, to catch Will pulling out a chair in the far corner, where he was instantly joined by another two men.

"Looks like I'm out of luck," slurred the man bent over his half-finished whisky in the stool to the left to him.

"Excuse me?" Hannibal asked.

"You've been staring at the popular pretty boy the moment you stepped into this place," Whisky Man said. "Why don't you go over? Handsome man like you. Seems you'd be more preferable than those two," he gestured to the table, where Will sat ramrod straight with his arms folded, his tension clear to Hannibal from across the room.

As Hannibal watched, the two men stood up, one of them giving an angry gesture to Will, before they stormed away.

"Cocktease!" The one with the curly blond hair yelled back at Will.

“Now that wasn’t nice,” the man next to Hannibal said.

“No, it wasn’t,” Hannibal placed the money for his gin and tonic on the bar top, taking a sip as he tracked the movement of the man who had verbally abused his beloved.

From the trajectory of his movement, the verbal abuser was headed into the male toilets.

Hannibal stood, resting his drink down on its coaster.

“I will be back in a moment.”

“Sure you will,” Whisky man said, with a sardonic tone.

He’d only taken three steps forward, when a redheaded man blocked his path.

“I haven’t seen you in here before.”

“Excuse me,” Hannibal said, brushing past the man, and continuing to the toilets.

As he stepped inside, he was thankful the bathroom was empty, except for one closed stall and his target, but not for the sharp scent of combined urine and defecation that assaulted his nostrils. Locking the door behind himself, he moved beside the curly-haired man, grabbed him by the throat and lifted him up into the air. The man instantly gasped, choking. Hannibal twisted his head sharply to the right, the satisfying crunch as his neck snapped a melodic tune to his ears. He then carried the body to the cubicle and placed it inside, before coming out and closing the door, utilising the man’s weight collapsing against the frame to keep it shut. As the toilet of the only closed stall flushed, Hannibal walked over to the sink to wash his hands. The man stepped out of the stall, nodded at Hannibal, washed his hands and departed the bathroom. With his heartrate still at a steady sixty beats per minute, Hannibal turned off the tap and came back into the main bar, where another man now sat with Will.

Obese, mid-thirties, balding head, wearing a white t-shirt.

Hannibal’s heart sank into his abdominal cavity.

Why did other perpetrators always turn out to be so disappointing?

Will and the man stood up and headed in the direction of the exit.

“The pretty boy is going out with *him*? Is he serious?” A voice sounded beside Hannibal.

Again, Will, you doubted that you wouldn’t be able to tempt this perpetrator with your looks, when you’ve turned the heads of more than a few men here?

With stealth precision, Hannibal trailed behind out of the bar and back across the car park, observing Will lead the man to their car. The man followed, staring at his ass in a cold, predator manner.

“What was this man doing?” Will turned back to the perpetrator.

“Staring at you. He noticed, like me, that you’re incredibly pretty.”

Hannibal looked forward to gouging his eyes out, later that night.

“Okay, well-“ Will arrived at the car door and the man pushed him against it, leaning in for a kiss. Hannibal rushed forward, to protect his Will. However, Will’s punch to the man’s throat displayed his ability to take care of himself. The man staggered back and groped for Will again, this time his hands going around his throat. Will kicked back at him, scratching his cheeks, choking sounds emitting from his larynx. Hannibal reached them, took out the prepared syringe from his pocket and jabbed it into the perpetrator’s neck, emptying the contents inside.

“Thank you, Hannibal,” Will made clear his sarcasm, as the perpetrator’s hands dropped from his throat. “Thanks for the help.”

“You were doing well without me,” Hannibal said. The man swayed on his feet then dropped to the asphalt.

“Did you enjoy watching him try strangle me?” Will asked as he helped Hannibal bundle their victim into the backseat of their car.

“I injected him as soon as I was able. I admit, I enjoyed watching you strike him in the throat. Wouldn’t think he would be so bold as to attempt to kiss you at this early stage.”

“Well, yes, considering his luring out consisted of telling me another man in the bar was stalking me and oh had I heard about the local serial killer? Pretty clever a diversion tactic.”

“Another man was. Me.”

“That didn’t go well, not at all,” Will said, closing the back door before going around to the passenger side. “I had a bunch of people come up to me. When they find the body, they’re going to want to find me. As well as you. At least a dozen men in that place can describe us.”

Hannibal went into the driver’s side and both placed their seatbelt on.

“By then we will be far out of this entire county. They’re not going to find us back in Bristol, Will. Wales is a pretty long way from our house,” Hannibal said, as Will examined his reddened neck in the rearview mirror.

“We have a pretty long drive ahead of us, thanks for reminding me, then a pretty long drive back,” Will said.

Hannibal switched on the ignition and pulled out of the parking space.

“Where were you, anyway?” Will asked.

“Taking care of the man who verbally assaulted you.”

They had pulled onto the main road, before Will spoke again.

“You didn’t…?”

“The body won’t be found for a while, don’t worry. I was careful. There will be none of my DNA on him.”

“Hannibal, what did you do?” Will asked, with the exact tone he had displayed towards one of his dogs, when it had urinated on the loungeroom carpet.

“Followed him to the bathroom and broke his neck, then hid the body in one of the bathroom stalls,” Hannibal said.

“Hannibal! He wasn’t…” Will ran his fingers through his hair. “This makes me beyond uncomfortable…”

“He was rude to you.”

“So he deserved to *die*?”

“It was obvious from across the room that him and his friend were making you uncomfortable. What did they say?”

“It wasn’t too bad. They asked me where I was from and I told them I was waiting for someone. Then he said to forget about my friend, they could show me a good time,” pink spread over his cheeks. “I don’t need your damned protection, Hannibal. I can take care of myself.”

“Were they crude to you?”

“Well, they did say I was being uptight and their cocks could loosen me up. I told them that was doubtful, as I’d need a magnifying glass to find them. They… didn’t take that well…”

Hannibal laughed.

“Sometimes a well-placed retort is far better than just going in and murdering someone,” Will said, his straight tone intertwined with levity.

“Something to keep in mind for the future.”

Both caught eyes and grinned at each other.

*

Will’s chest rose up and down in a frantic motion, the blood dripping off his body, that hadn’t been licked off by Hannibal, a beautiful palette against the patches of pale flesh and plastic covering the floor and furniture. Blood and sweat and semen filled Hannibal’s nose, Will’s trembling torso warm against his. The red viscous substance had even drenched his hair, lending the darkened strands an auburn hue.

“I always meant to ask,” Will said. “How do you use the hair in your cooking?”

“I don’t. I tended to dispose of the hair.”

“Hm… The way he’s facing us. Glad I didn’t notice while we were being intimate, would have taken me out of the mood.”

Hannibal glanced over at the bloodied corpse seated on the couch two metres away, the hollow eye sockets leaking bloody tears, as though in mourning of the man’s brutal demise. During their onslaught, Hannibal had plucked out the man’s eyes using his own fingers, as Will had driven a knife into the man’s back, severing his spine.

The night’s darkness was shattered by the searing burn of their bloody vengeance on the one who had caused others so much anguish.

Will moved his head up, from where it lay on Hannibal’s equally bloodied chest and favoured him with a content smile.

“If it’s okay, you can dismember the body. I’ll take a shower and then go out and play with the dogs. They haven’t seen me in a few days. They’ll be crazy for attention.”

“Always leaving me to do the hard work,” Hannibal grinned back.

“I did the hard work of luring the asshole out to the car. I’m due some rest.”

“You performed admirably,” Hannibal plucked off a curl that was stuck to Will’s left cheek.

“Indeed, considering how much he stunk of body odour.” Will whacked Hannibal’s left buttock and climbed off him.

*

Jack Crawford wasn’t even attempting to be subtle. Hannibal had noticed him following when he visited the local store for more pinot noir. With ease, he lost the FBI agent, before doubling back to the car. That Jack was there wasn’t surprising, how he had discovered them, however, was more of a mystery. Hannibal had covered their tracks well. Jack Crawford was more of a talented investigator than he had given him credit for.

The FBI agent was alone, which meant his allegiance was clear. He wasn’t there to arrest Will and Hannibal, he was there to convince Will to leave.

You won’t have him, Jack.

Hannibal was not used to the anxiety of waiting for another to arrive home, when one was suffering a crisis; the fluttering in the stomach, the need to keep oneself busy, the acceleration of the mind’s thoughts. Hence, as soon as Will stepped into the door after work and began taking off his coat, Hannibal pounced on him.

“Hi, Hanni-“

He’s mine, Jack. Back off.

Hannibal slammed him back against the door so hard his head slammed backwards with a loud thud. Before Will could protest, Hannibal's mouth was against his, his hands tearing the coat and scarf off and flinging them to the ground.

"So you're-"

Hannibal threw him onto his back on the ground and shoved his trousers and underwear down, taking Will's flaccid member in his mouth, as he grabbed the lube from his pocket, poured the liquid over his fingers and shoved them inside him. Will groaned, his member now showing interest in Hannibal's loving ministrations. The moaning grew louder, as Hannibal continued to use his fingers, tongue and inner mouth to give him pleasure.

"Hannibal…" He spread his knees for better access and gripped Hannibal's hair, which his lover took as encouragement to plunge his head up and down faster, his fingers pressing repeatedly against the sweet spot that now caused cute mewling sounds from Will's throat with every jab. Hannibal needed him to come, to reach the height of ecstasy and call out his lover's name, to gift Hannibal his semen; for the come to run down his oesophagus and settle down into his stomach, before moving around his digestive system. A nutrient more sustaining than mere food or drink.

Will didn't disappoint, crying out Hannibal's name, as he pulsated in his mouth. Hannibal eagerly swallowed the torrent of come that shot into his throat.

Yes, my love. Give me all of this and more. Give me all of you.

With Will still shaking and moaning, Hannibal tore his trousers and underwear off, ripped the underwear in half and flipped him over onto his stomach, using one half to tie his hands and the other to tie his legs, before pulling him up to his knees.

"So, you're-" Will stopped and sighed, as Hannibal entered him, pulling his hips back until he was buried deep inside. Aligning his front against his lover's back, Hannibal pressed his face into his sweet scented hair, his hand against his chest, feeling the frantic thud of his heartbeat, visualising the strong organ pressing against his own, both beating in time, the blood from Will's ventricles pushing up and out into Hannibal's aorta.

"Will," he whispered and thrusted, frantic but careful not to hurt his lover, allowing himself to be lost in the ecstasy of the moment. There was no past betrayals or potential future anguish, there was only Will's acceptance of Hannibal's need for him, Will's surrender to Hannibal's desires.

"Yes, Hannibal… yes…"

With a loud cry, Hannibal exploded inside him, coating his insides with his semen.

Mine. Always.

Still trembling and panting, Hannibal kissed his sweaty neck before pulling out and undoing the cloth around his wrists and ankles.

“Good to see you too,” Will said, his tone wry. “Yes, I did have a good day, thank you.”

*

“…so Sandra is pregnant… We’re invited to the wedding, by the way. And she’s convinced she’s going to be fired. It’s ridiculous!” Will said, soaping Hannibal’s chest, as Hannibal massaged shampoo into his hair, not the least interested in the office politics of the university. However, since they’d come into the shower together, Will had spoken for a good ten minutes about work gossip. Comportment dictated that Hannibal listen and give appropriate commentary. This was how a normal person in society, who wasn’t a diagnosed psychopath, operated. Will wasn’t pretending to care for his cover, this was obvious. He genuinely seemed to like his colleagues. Hannibal found it mildly disappointing that Will, with all of his gifts, still fitted into the mould of the ‘normal’ human being, to a disturbing degree.

“It will be fine, I told her. She’s looking forward to coming to our place for dinner. I advised her you’re a terrific meat chef,” Will said, the humour obvious in his tone.

“Mmm…” Hannibal nuzzled his shoulder.

Will drew his head under the shower head to wash the shampoo off. Hannibal swallowed, as he gazed upon his long neck, the light bulge of his adam’s apple.

“So, you surprised me with a hot quickie as soon as I entered the door, I’ve discussed work, but we still haven’t discussed the obvious return of Jack Crawford.”

His head moved back down again, his pale eyes sparkling with humour.

“I saw him today, when I was picking up the wine,” Hannibal admitted. “Has he made contact with you?”

“Not yet, but he will. He was lingering close to my car when I came out of university. Think he wanted to talk to me. Not sure why he didn’t.”

“Perhaps he was waiting for the opportune moment.”

“We should invite him to dinner,” Will handed Hannibal the conditioner. “And I meant *to* dinner, not *as* a dinner. There is a distinction.”

Hannibal poured conditioner onto his hand and rubbed the liquid into Will’s hair.

“Jack has beaten me up twice.”

“Both times you deserved it.”

“Allow me one body part, as you did Bedelia,” Hannibal begged, his heart slamming in his chest. He had already summarised Will’s reply in his mind.

Not Jack. Don’t harm him. Leave him be, Hannibal.

Will’s smile loosened Hannibal’s innards.

“If I say no you’re going to do it anyway. Fine, he doesn’t need two kidneys.”

Hannibal stepped back, unable to suppress his awe over the man before him.

His uncharacteristic anxiety over Will’s reaction to Jack’s return turned out to be for nil. If Will was willing to desecrate Jack’s body in such a fashion, it was clear he had no desire to be convinced by his friend to return to the United States.

How could I have been so mistaken?

Against all of the natural laws of the universe, a diagnosed psychopath had discovered another of such great empathy that the empath understood him, furthermore, loved him, wanted to be with him, to create a murderous life with him. To Hannibal, the greatest tragedy of their pairing was that Will could never comprehend the extent of his true emotions towards him. Every day they were together, Will continued to break through to what little light Hannibal possessed, by the sheer dazzle of his own.

His love for his murder partner, at times, was so strong, he feared he would pass over from obsession to pure psychosis, to ironically end up in a mental institution not out of the need to kill but a need to love.

“You would allow your friend to be so mutilated?” Hannibal said, as Will again flung his head back to wash the conditioner out of his hair.

“As you once said, he is not the saint he makes himself out to be.”

“We three have a… complicated past…”

“We did. But I’ve made my choice to be with you, Hannibal. Not that it wasn’t good to see Jack.”

Hannibal berated himself for considering even for a moment, that Will would leave him, to return to the United States with Jack.

*

Jack did possess at least one distinct talent. He was, indeed, an excellent investigator. However, Hannibal was his superior. Capturing the FBI agent was far too easy. Hannibal stalked him to his rental house, waited until he came out to his rental car early in the morning, injected him with a tranquiliser, piled his unconscious form into the back seat and drove him back to his and Will’s house.

“The potatoes are finished. Crisped nicely,” Will walked out of the kitchen, as Hannibal dragged the still unconscious Jack through the lounge room.

“Do you want to watch the kidney removal? Make sure I don’t accidentally take, say a different organ?” Hannibal asked, smirking.

“I trust you,” Will said.

As Hannibal dragged Jack's dead weight to the back room, which was already set up for his operation, he found Will's disinterest in his mutilating of Jack for culinary purposes to not be a surprise. The height of their love for one another displayed when they killed together. Yet Will tended to refrain from removing the organs or eating them.

"That's your thing, Hannibal," he had said, after they had killed Chester Scotchman and Hannibal had offered him a slice of his liver.

His thing.

Will wished for them to have interests outside each other. Hannibal's was cannibalism. He found the idea far too quaint to be disappointed in Will. Considering all that his partner had given up for him, he could abide by Will not sharing in the eating of his victims, also.

With Hannibal's skill, the operation was a success. After bringing the kidney to the kitchen bench, and placing it beside Will's chopped vegetables, he dragged Jack's slack body back into the dining room, set him up at the table and returned to the kitchen.

Will's eyes flicked down to the organ.

"He's okay?"

"He'll live," Hannibal said.

*

As Hannibal was spooning the roasted pumpkin salad and crisp potatoes onto his plate, Jack's eyelids fluttered open.

"What… what have you done to me?" His voice was raspy.

"Right now, you are being served dinner," Hannibal said, as Will, seated perpendicular to Jack, leant forward and placed a gentle hand on his ex-boss's shoulder.

"Jack, it's Will…"

Jack dropped his head and focused on the man talking to him.

"What's wrong with me?"

"You won't die. You can survive without a kidney," Hannibal said, lighting the last candle on the table and sitting opposite Will.

"You son of a bitch. You really are," Jack murmured.

Hannibal laughed.

"Are you okay, Jack? Are you in pain?" Will asked.

"Surprisingly, no, considering I'm missing one of my major organs."

“You will enjoy the meat. It’s devilled kidneys,” Hannibal said, cutting a portion of his own meat.

“Pass,” Jack said, pushing the plate away from him.

“Bedelia did the same thing when I offered her part of her own leg. Shame,” Hannibal bought the fork to his mouth, chewed and swallowed. “You’re tasty. Take good care of your own body.”

“I notice you’re not having any,” Jack pointed at Will’s serving of salad.

“Need to maintain my figure,” Will joked.

“You two didn’t make it easy for me to find you,” Jack said, picking up the glass of red wine before him and taking a sip. “Ooh that’s good.”

Hannibal grinned. For all of his faults, Jack had an appreciative palate.

“But I am an excellent investigator, if I don’t say so myself. I started by looking into vicious crimes, where organs were missing from the bodies. A curious connection was discovered between the two I found. Both were lead suspects in the most horrendous of crimes, themselves.”

“Chester Scotchman?” Will asked.

Jack nodded. “And Andrew Bacchus.”

“Oh, so that was his name,” Will said, before shoving a forkful of salad into his mouth.

“Chester Scotchman, a vicious child molester who abused his own grandson and killed him. Andrew Bacchus, what he did to his victims…. I talked to the lead investigator on the case. He said he’d never witnessed more vicious crimes. He cut off one victim’s eyelids, so he could watch him torture him.” Jack grew silent and focused on his wine, as red as blood. “I used to have such a moralistic view. Rehabilitation over vengeance. But as time went on… You could say I evolved or devolved. With what these men did…I’m not glad they’re dead. Not at all. Some people can’t be rehabilitated, no matter how much society wishes it to be true.”

“Perhaps they may have fallen in love, as I did,” Hannibal said.

Jack’s attention switched from Hannibal to Will and back again. “Yours is an extraordinary circumstance which will never be repeated. There can only be one Will Graham in the world.”

“Indeed,” Hannibal reached across the table, took his partner’s hand and kissed the warm flesh, as Will’s face creased in an expression of gratitude towards Jack.

“There will be more, won’t there?” Jack asked. “You already have others planned.”

“I can’t… Being in their head…the truth of their horrific desires and compulsions…” Will’s delicate features twisted in anguish. “And knowing too the victims, their anguish, the families’ pain, and so it goes on and on. When they’re dead, I know peace.”

“I’m sorry, Will,” Jack whispered. “I did this to you. I blamed Hannibal, because I didn’t want to accept that I was the one who pushed you to this path.”

“I couldn’t let it go, Jack. It was always going to be a part of me. I was pushing away the inevitable. I gave in to the dark. But there is light,” tears slid down his face. “There’s always the light too. In equal measure.”

“Amen to that,” Jack said.

Hannibal could never understand the light that Will spoke of, could never fully grasp the texture or weight. But, through Will’s eyes, he could behold an inkling of the truth.

And the truth was, indeed, beautiful.

*

“This is Rosie, Duncan and Bluey,” Will said, as the two golden retrievers ran up and jumped up at him, with the corgi jogging behind. Will knelt down and smothered the dogs in hugs, pats and kisses. Jack raised a brow.

“This way,” Hannibal directed him to the wicker chair facing the woodland that formed a part of their back yard.

“Lovely view you have here,” Jack said.

Will came over and sat beside Hannibal, with Jack on the other side. Instantly, the two golden retrievers snapped at each other, fighting over which one was going to lay their head in Will’s lap. The corgi barked, jumped up and took prime position, causing Rosie to lie down against his feet and Duncan to trot over and sit in front of Hannibal.

“Always goes to me after Will has given her a fuss. I’m an afterthought,” Hannibal said, patting the dog’s head.

Jack laughed and turned to Will.

“There’s a river past that forest, isn’t there?”

Will nodded.

“You’ve created your dream place again,” Jack said. “The river, the dogs.”

“I’m happy, Jack.” Will’s glowing smile stitched together the last of the tears in Hannibal’s heart, caused by his fraught concern of betrayal, that afternoon.

“That’s what I wanted for you,” Jack said.

“You wanted to use my brain. Don’t lie. You never cared much about consequences,” Will said, with an even tone.

“I always liked you. It wasn’t entirely about your genius. I tried to protect you, as much as I could.”

Will patted the dog on his lap, biting his top lip.

“How have you been coping?”

“Some days are better than others,” Jack admitted. “I take it one day at a time.”

As much as Jack had been an annoyance to him in the past, Hannibal was pleased he was doing well.

*

Jack was unimpressed to learn he couldn’t leave. Hannibal was insistent he stay a week, to make certain his kidney-less wound on the left-hand side of his lower back wouldn’t be infected. After directing him to the spare room, he took Will’s hand and led him to their bedroom, where he threw him onto the bed and crawled on top of him.

“Let’s go slow tonight,” Will said, his hands soft, sensuous in Hannibal’s hair. “No biting, no roughness. Let’s make it slow. Sensual.”

They took their time, undressing piece by piece, using their tongues, their hands, their rubbing bodies, to bring each other to the edge of ecstasy before drawing back. Both succumbed together, their bodies aligned, flesh on flesh, in flesh, tongue on tongue, hands grasped together. Afterwards, Will fell asleep in Hannibal’s arms but Hannibal remained awake, basking in the smell, sight, feel, taste and sound of his beloved.

In the morning, Hannibal woke Will to go again. This time, after spilling inside his partner once more, lining his inner walls with his come, as Will spurted his own semen between their bodies, Hannibal allowed his now exhausted Will to rest, as he pulled on his dressing gown and came out of their bedroom to the kitchen.

Jack Crawford already sat at the dining table.

“I already made coffee. Should be still hot,” Jack said.

“Allow me the honour of making you breakfast,” Hannibal said.

“Will’s still asleep?” Jack asked, sipping from a mug and wincing.

“Do you want more pain relief?” Hannibal asked.

“Seeing as you caused me to be in such pain, sure.”

Hannibal walked out of the kitchen and down the hall to the bathroom, took out a packet of oxycodone from the cabinet and then returned, handing two pills to Jack. He then observed,

with medical concern, the other man swallow the medication down with his coffee.

“So… breakfast…”

Intuiting Jack’s eyes on him, Hannibal whistled to himself, searching through the cupboards and deciding what meal to prepare.

“What are you doing with Will, Hannibal? What do you want with him?”

“He is mine, Jack. My Will.”

“He’s no one but his own person. You don’t own him, Hannibal.”

Hannibal shoved a box of cornflower onto the kitchen bench and retained Jack’s gaze.

“I haven’t hurt him. I won’t hurt him. I have allowed him the space to come to me, to decide what is best for his evolution with us together.”

Jack took two more slow sips of his coffee before responding.

“This is crazy… but I believe you. I noticed the way you were looking at him last night. But then it wasn’t any different to the way you *always* looked at him. As though I wasn’t even there.”

“He is the sun around which I orbit,” Hannibal admitted.

Jack’s eyes and mouth widened.

“You really are in love with him, aren’t you?”

“I am.”

As if on cue, footsteps sounded down the hall. Will emerged, adorable in his dressing gown and with his messy bed hair.

“Morning, Jack. Did you sleep well?”

Hannibal wrapped an arm around his chest and kissed his cheek.

“Ressens-tu l'ivresse. J'ai si faim de toi,” [i] he murmured, swaying with his partner.

Will laughed. “And good morning to you, Hannibal.”
*

Jack took more of an interest in their lives than Bedelia had. In the five days he had been their, at first, unwilling room mate, he had eaten most meals with them, walked the dogs to the river with Will, indulged in games of chess with both and even conferred on ‘cases’. Hannibal would normally be miffed at the man who had bombarded his way into their lives, but that wouldn’t be logical. After all, he had been the one who had removed his kidney, thus forcing him to stay. Besides, Will had been elevated by having his friend visit, laughing and

smiling often, which had the impact of elevating Hannibal's own mood. Will's increased good mood also meant he was even friskier in bed, an added bonus.

Hence, as they were lying in bed, with their limbs entangled, Will's breath still fluttering, his hair in sweaty clumps over his face, Hannibal did not expect the words that came out of his succulent mouth.

"As much as I'm enjoying Jack being here. He's a bit intrusive. You know me, I'm a loner. I missed Jack and I'll miss him when he goes. But I also miss having our own space." Catching Hannibal's reaction, his brows furrowed. "You're surprised by this."

"You're enjoying Jack's company."

"Sure, but I want to go back to what we do best." He leant forward, until his lips were a hair breadth away from Hannibal's. "Our own investigating."
*

"A serial killer driving me to the airport," Jack murmured, as Hannibal pulled the car over into the drop off zone. All three men exited the vehicle, and Hannibal strolled over to lift his case out of the boot, as Jack and Will embraced. "I can't believe I'm not dobbing you two in. Honestly, I must be crazy."

Will was as silent as he had been the drive to the airport, his eyes bright.

"Happy travels," Hannibal said to Jack, handing him his case.

"Hey, it's okay," Jack pressed a hand into Will's shoulder. "It's okay."

He nodded at Hannibal, took the case from him and strolled to the airport entrance, without looking back.

*

Will was sombre throughout dinner. Sombre for the parting of the man he had wanted to leave for the past two days. Being close with another who didn't share his psychopathic lack of empathy caused Hannibal to comprehend his distance from other humans even more. Had the ability, he would have been concerned by this revelation. Hannibal could only obtain some understanding, as always, by comparing what Will was feeling, to what he had experienced when it came to his own past dealings with his now life partner. When Will had rejected him, just before he gave himself in to the police for the Chesapeake Ripper's crimes, he had experienced pure loneliness and rejection. At the time, he had been astonished he could comprehend such anguish. It was as though his heart had been cleaved in two.

That was different. I am in love. Will only barely likes Jack.

"Are you lonely, Will?" He asked.

Will placed down the spoon that had been digging into his chocolate mousse. "No. I have you, I have the dogs. The people at work. It's normal to be sad when a friend visits and leaves, Hannibal. Doesn't mean there's anything terribly wrong with me."

You know I will never understand your empathy for others. And yet you still stay.

"I love you, my Will. It's important that you know this."

Will tilted his head, favouring him with the typical expression he gave whenever Hannibal was telling him something obvious.

"And I love you. I know that, considering what you are, you find it difficult to comprehend anyone could love you as I do. But it's true. We have a very… non-traditional relationship."

"Many would label dysfunctional."

"But that's us. Suits us perfectly, wouldn't you say?" Will slid out of his chair, pulled out Hannibal's and sat down in his lap.

"How about we take the dessert into the bedroom and eat it off each other's bodies?"

Hannibal agreed that was a very enticing idea, indeed.

Tbc…

[i] "Do you feel the intoxication? I'm so hungry of you." French translation

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

> Thanks to all who have read/commented/sent kudos/favourited. It's been a blast writing about these lovely murder partners.
> As Hannibal is one of my fave tv shows, this most probably won't be the last time I venture into the Hannigram world. :)

Hannibal was eviscerating the screaming man when his friend broke free of Will's hold and, despite the twelve stabs to his abdomen and chest courtesy of Will's knife, managed to charge five paces before Will jumped on his back.

"You ok, my Will?" Hannibal asked, pulling out more of his victim's intestines to lope over his bloodied and mangled shoulders.

"I'm fine," Will placed the knife on his victim's neck, before slashing his throat so deep the inner tendons of his neck displayed, arterial spray splashing onto Hannibal and the still hollering mutilated man before him. Hannibal closed his eyelids, indulging in the warm sticky liquid on his flesh.

Will's victim collapsed to the ground, and Will fell with him. Forgoing his own prey, Hannibal grabbed Will and pulled him to himself, their tongues desperate in each other's mouths, Hannibal's victim's desperate screams a symphony to their macabre machinations.

"I love you, my Will," Hannibal said, trailing the back of his fingers over Will's cheek, tracing the pink line of his scar.

"Fuck you!" The soon-to-be-dead other man rolled over and grabbed his ankle. Hannibal shook his foot loose and stamped on his hand, the ensuing satisfying crunch, indicating fractured metacarpals, causing the screams to reach soprano crescendo, a delight to Hannibal's eardrums.

"I love you too," Will said.

Together, they moved as one to their final victim. As Hannibal sliced into his femoral artery, Will cut into his brachial artery. The man convulsed up and down, choking noises emitting from his throat, as his blood sprayed up and out in an arch around them. Will's eyes in his blood-soaked face glittered, his expression one of pure triumph, but also release.

"Thank you," he whispered to Hannibal.

*

Hannibal was hanging up the dish cloth when the back door closed, indicating Will returning from feeding the dogs.

The meat was particularly succulent for them that night, as it had been for the past five. Will disagreed with Hannibal that the dogs were growing more robust as a result of the added protein. Though Hannibal was reluctant to finish the meat, sharing with the dogs did hold one advantage. Once Hannibal and the dogs had finished eating the particular succulent form of meat, then him and Will would begin their hunt again.

Muffled voices indicated that Will had switched on the television in the lounge room. Hannibal wandered in, taking a moment to position one of his knights in front of Will's bishop, in their on-going chess match seated on the dresser, before settling down next to Will on the couch and placing an arm around his slender shoulders. Will responded by taking Hannibal's hand in his.

Images of war and destruction flashed on the plasma screen before them. Will was always intent on watching the news for two weeks after their intimate violence, for any stories mentioning them. Hannibal suspected this wasn't out of a fear they would be caught, but an interest as to what would be said, in concerned with their murderous activities.

Will flicked through the channels, to more news of death, destruction and murder, interspersed with advertisements for toothpaste and a reality television series about discovering the latest singing superstar. Hannibal had never regarded himself as a sick individual. As far as he was concerned, society was sick, a cancerous tumour spreading to destroy all that was healthy and whole. He was one of the few, including his lovely Will, who recognised the malady and took advantage.

A photo flashed on the screen, of two smiling teenaged girls with their arms slung around each other's shoulders.

Will placed the remote down on the springy surface of the couch beside himself.

They didn't need the rehashing from the news reporter, as they'd been privy to the case from the beginning. Two teenaged girls, best friends, kidnapped while one was staying over the other's house for the night, the parents murdered. The girls were held for five days, in which time they were horrifically abused, before they were strangled to death. The two perpetrators, citing a long history of trauma, received ten years each and were out in five, due to 'good behaviour'. Three weeks later, they were the suspects in the brutal murder of another teenager.

Only, they never made it to court. Hannibal and Will got to them first.

The television now showed footage of a plump man with a monstrous moustache. The heading labelled him as 'Charles Zavanch, Lead Investigator'.

"We can't condone vigilante justice, if this *was* vigilante justice. Where will it end?"

The footage cut to amateur video of a young girl playing in a sprinkler, with the voiceover stating.

“Detective Zavanch appears to be in the minority, in the town, with many actually praising what is vastly being seen as a vigilante killing of the two convicted men.”

A woman in her sixties with long grey hair appeared on the screen. The heading labelled her as ‘Sharon Lancett.’

“I will never get my Claudia back. But with what those animals did to her and Suzie… Knowing what they suffered before they were murdered. My only disappointment is that I wasn’t there to join in, when someone paid them back, in kind.”

“So, you’re condoning the actions of these so-called vigilantes?” The journalist’s voice sounded.

“Those men would never be rehabilitated.”

Another woman showed on screen now, one with long black hair. The heading labelled her as ‘Farrah Buble’.

“When I heard the men who had killed my sister were dead… the relief I felt… I went to Suzie’s grave and cried and cried.”

Hannibal turned from the screen, to view Will’s profile, the strained focus tensing his features.

“Why is it important you watch this, Will?”

“I need to know…I did the right thing,” the words came out jolt by jolt, as though they were difficult to pass through his larynx.

“So, if these people had said you *hadn’t* done the right thing, then our slaying of these teenagers’ killers would have been wrong? Are your actions that determined by what others think?”

“Maybe…” Will now faced Hannibal, large blue eyes shimmering with tears. “I kill because it makes me feel beyond good. Makes me feel powerful, almost… godly.”

“Yes, we have discussed the notion that hurting ones we feel deserve it feels good.”

“To me, it’s avenging the victims, who will never get that chance. But I never forget the families and friends.”

“It feels good to know they are supporting your actions.”

Will nodded.

“But there will be ones who won’t,” Hannibal said. “There will be ones who, despite their pain, believe that vengeance is wrong. They will not only not support you, they will despise you. And me.”

“They won’t be wrong,” Will said.

Will's uncertainty regarding the morals of his actions was not surprising. Hannibal suspected he would always hold onto his strong ethics, even if some were in direct opposition to others. This facet of his multi-dimensional partner only served to draw Hannibal closer to him, to bask in the warm glow of his complexity.

"Perhaps not," Hannibal said. "But *you* are the one who needs to justify to *yourself* your actions. Not them."

"I already have," Will said. "With so much pain and suffering, I help to ease a little. That's what I tell myself, anyway. People *aren't* created equal, I believe that now. The victims of these men, they deserve to have peace, more than their killers. Now, they at least can find peace in knowing these men won't haunt them anymore."

"Do you consider, Will, that it's really *your* peace you're referencing to?"

"Always the psychiatrist," Will's lips upcurled. "You're right, as usual. But my true peace isn't only in the final act we achieve together. I find peace in the preparing, the investigating, knowing we will achieve this ultimate aim."

Hannibal pulled him closer and Will rested his head on his chest, so he took the opportunity, to run his hands through his curls, growing out in the two years since they'd moved to Bristol together. Now they were as long as when Hannibal had first met him, so cute and fumbling in that office, so many years before.

"There's other peace to be found in simple moments like this," Will said. "Fishing, playing with the dogs, reading a book while you draw. Who would have thought life with a serial killer would be so content?"

Hannibal considered the notion of peace and contentment and was in agreeance with Will. Though the apex of their love was displayed in the violence they shared, the build to that apex was displayed in a myriad of ways. He could count the obvious intimacy such as the multiple times they had made love. But then, there were more subtle nuances; Will handing him a cup of tea when he came in from pricing a new painting from a reputable art dealer, sitting on the balcony drawing the landscape, while Will fussed over the dogs beside him, waking to the rising sunlight highlighting his Will's beauty.

Hannibal grabbed the remote off the lounge chair and switched the television off.

"I was watching that," Will jested.

Hannibal cupped his jaw in the palms of his hands.

"You are the only one who can decide what is right and wrong for you," Hannibal said.

"My intellect tells me it's wrong what we do, murdering others, no matter how horrific their crimes. But I can't stop. I won't stop."

"What is preventing you from stopping?"

Will laughed. “Ironically, my own increased sense of empathy. I understand the anguish of the ones we murder. But I understand their victims more.”

“But for with me.”

“No, even with you. I know the anguish of Abigail’s death more than your anguish while killing her.”

“I understand,” Hannibal said. If he could give Will Abigail back, he would. He would do anything for his Will.

“You can’t,” Will’s smile didn’t match the cold weight of emotion filtering through his eyes. “You don’t have the capacity to.”

“I do when it comes to Abigail,” Hannibal insisted. “I loved her too, in my own way.”

“No, you can’t get to say that,” Will said, disentangling himself from Hannibal’s embrace. “Not when you murdered her.”

“I tried to murder *you*, out of love.”

“This is so messed up!” Will said, the tears sliding down his face. “You will never understand how messed up we are together!”

“I love you, Will,” Hannibal’s fingers, reaching to entangle in Will’s hair, trembled. “I won’t harm you. I will do anything you ask of me. Anything at all.”

“What if I asked you to hand yourself in? To leave me and never see me again?” Will’s irises continued to swirl with convoluted emotion.

“Is this what you want?” Hannibal’s expression was calm, belying the pound of his heart, the sharp clench of his innards.

“No! I don’t want to lose you. That’s what’s most messed up of all! I *need* to be with you.”

Hannibal forced their bodies together, hugging his partner so tight his arms shook. Will’s own arms went around Hannibal’s back and returned the embrace.

“I love you so much,” Will said, his voice trembling. “I know it’s wrong, but I do. I can’t *not* be with you.”

Hannibal’s innards released their painful constriction, though his heart remained in jackhammer.

“I am sorry, Will, for all of the pain I caused you in the past. Believe me when I affirm I will never harm you again. My love for you prevents it.”

Will pulled back and lay down on his back on the couch, his tear streaked face flushed and puffy, yet still painful in its beauty.

“Take me… here… on this couch.”

Will’s mouth tasted of salty tears.

*

Post tense discussion and intimacy, Will returned to his usual amiable, sweet but grumpy in the morning self.

Two days later, there was another swift change in his murder partner. The change was subtle, but Hannibal was sensitive enough to the emotional variances in his partner’s mood, to notice the shift in his behaviour. Will was aversive in discussion and, at times, wouldn’t meet Hannibal’s eyes. One morning, when Hannibal had overheard a phone conversation in the lounge room, while he was in the kitchen, Will had lied and denied even being on his mobile.

Hannibal considered whether to bring up this new side to his partner, determined to absolve whatever issues Will was going through, convinced they were directly linked to their discussion from two nights before. However, Will remained also as sweet and loving in their intimacy as always and Hannibal resolved to hold onto that, even if a part of Will held back.

On the third day, for the first time in their relationship, Hannibal awoke to an empty bed. For a moment, he stared at the ruffled sheets beside himself, before moving this gaze to the open bathroom door. His heart trying to escape out of his throat, Hannibal shoved on his dressing gown and walked through the house, calling his partner’s name.

“Damn you, Hannibal, this was meant to be a surprise!” Will jumped, startled, as Hannibal entered the kitchen. A frypan before him sizzled sausages and fried eggs.

“What are you doing?” Hannibal asked.

“What does it look like?” Will at least retained his usual grouchy morning demeanour. “I figured, seeing as it’s your birthday, I’d start by making *you* breakfast in bed, for once.”

Hannibal blinked.

“Yes, Hannibal, you were right. It was Stacy I was on the phone with yesterday, pretending to have terrible gastroenteritis, so I could take today off for your birthday.”

So, this was the reason for Will’s aversive behaviour?

“I’m sorry I’ve acted like a bit of an ass the last few days, but I wanted all of my birthday surprises to be… well, a surprise.”

Hannibal glanced back on the table. A large box covered in wrapping paper with a bow sat on the surface.

“I felt so bad for missing it last year. But then you, asshole, didn’t remind me.”

“It wasn’t important to me,” Hannibal admitted.

“You took me to that fancy restaurant for mine.”

“I enjoy keeping you happy, my Will.”

“Shut up and open your present,” Will grinned.

Hannibal walked over to the table and stared at the gift.

“What’s wrong?” Will asked. “Have I done something-?”

“I have never celebrated my birthday before,” Hannibal said, bewilderment creasing his brow.

What’s the correct protocol for reacting here?

“Come on, Hannibal, you must have had parties as a child.”

Hannibal shook his head.

“There was no celebration in the orphanage and I don’t recall any parties before then. As an adult, I told myself it no longer mattered.”

Will’s lovely features were creased with the oddest expression. He turned off the stove, strode over to Hannibal and pulled him into a tight embrace.

“Hannibal, I’m so sorry!” Will said, stroking his back, hair and face, the movements of his fingers sending currents of pleasure throughout the rest of Hannibal’s being.

“No matter, my Will. We will make up for all of them today.”

Will leaned forward and pecked his lips. From the taste, he’d already drunk coffee that morning.

“Yes, we will. Open your present,” he grinned.

Hannibal tore off the wrapping and opened the box, to another, smaller box. He tore off the first box and opened the second box, to a third, even smaller box. Will leaned against the dining dresser with his arms folded and watched, his smile widening, as Hannibal tore open a fourth and then fifth box, opening smaller and smaller boxes, before breaking up into laughter.

“Enjoying yourself?” Hannibal asked, opening his tenth box, which was smaller now than his palm. He had to admit, he was enjoying himself. Will’s laughter was never loud or raucous, but more giggly, sweet, as he was. Laughing along with Will, he opened the final box and pulled out a sheet of paper, reading it with interest, as Will came over and placed an arm around his neck, to read over his shoulder.

Will’s slanted handwriting detailed a list, the heading reading:

Hannibal Lecter Birthday Gifts.

I, Will Graham, gift Hannibal Lecter, the following gifts, to be given at any time Hannibal wishes, should he tick off the space next to the gift.

What followed, was a list of fifteen items, from the mundane.

I will do the dishes for a week, without argument.

Hannibal read the more sexual ones with great interest.

I will get down on my knees and fellate you and swallow your come.

I will lie down or bend over so you can rim me and come over my ass or hair.

I will be ready and lubed, so you can penetrate me whenever and wherever you want.

"This one interests me," Hannibal said.

"Of course, that one would," Will laughed, kissing his hair.

"I have a great interest in using it to take you over your lecture lectern at the university."

"That would be interesting in class… as a way to get me fired and us both arrested."

"As well as fulfil the fantasies of some of your students…But no, we can go at night and risk getting caught by security."

You can choose one a person to murder. Anyone. Anytime.

"Thank you, Will. This is, indeed, beautiful." An odd emotion soothed Hannibal's stomach. He supposed this was what others meant when they said they were 'touched'. It was as though Will had reached in and laid a gentle hand on his soul.

"As it's your birthday, you can choose what we do for today. But only during sunlight hours. I've booked La Boehme front row tickets for tonight, followed by a private reservation at 'Le Gavroche'." Will kissed his cheek and elongated his spine.

"After breakfast, can we make love all morning?"

"Of course! It's your birthday," Will grinned, returning to the kitchen.

*

"Will, what is this?" Hannibal asked, trying to puzzle the 'selfie' Will had taken of them on his I-phone. "You've managed to capture half of your own eyeball. Though it is indeed a lovely eye, I was hoping to get both of us in the picture!"

Will giggled so loud the snooty woman the next table over in the salmon dress turned in her chair to glare at the unruly couple in the corner, before turning back to her bored dinner companion.

"You want to show Toby at the art museum," Will laughed.

“You deliberately kept yourself out of the photo, so I can’t have bragging rights to my beautiful partner, who he so obviously is enamoured by,” Hannibal took another sip of his wine. Too fruity, and not enough of a spicy tang on the tongue.

“So, this is an ownership contest? You’re my big tough boyfriend so he’d better back off?” Will laughed.

“No matter,” Hannibal kissed the photo. “I’ll only show the ones I take of you while you’re sleeping.”

“No, that’s not creepy at all. Though for you… that’s romance.”

As Will returned to his souffle suissesse, Hannibal flicked through the photos of Will on his mobile, the majority from when his partner was aware the picture was being taken. In one, Will was asleep, his hair haphazardly over his forehead, serene expression showcasing a beauty rivalling any of the professional photos Toby At The Art Museum displayed of lit and photoshopped models.

“This is my favourite,” Hannibal said, turning the mobile around so Will could view the image.

“Am I drooling?” Will appeared more interested in his souffle than Hannibal’s unsolicited picture snapping whilst he was unawares.

As Hannibal turned the photo around to verify Will was joking, a child screeched in the background.

“I’m glad we decided to not have children after all,” Will winced.

“We’re very selfish people. Wouldn’t fit in with our lives.”

Will laughed.

*

“Scrazzle. On a triple word score, so that’s a lot of points,” Will said. “S C R A Z Z L E.” He placed the blocks on the scrabble board.

“Scrazzle isn’t a word!” Hannibal protested.

“Yes, it is! It means to be bewildered. To be scrazzled.”

“Yes, in your alternate universe, perhaps.”

“So that’s one hundred and fifty points,” Will giggled. “Scrazzled.”

Not wanting to be upped, Hannibal took out a bunch of letters and added them to Will’s Z.

“Huvazal. A small ceramic plate utilised by ancient Sumerians. HUVAZAL. Eighty-eight points.”

Will laughed so hard tears stood in the corner of his eyelids.

“A small ceramic plate…” He laughed even louder. “Huvazal…”

Hannibal smiled, bemused by Will’s amusement.

Thank you, Will, for yet another excellent day in your presence.

Breakfast cooked by his beloved, his first birthday gift which he had yet to make use of, a morning making love in every room of the house and then a night of good opera and dinner followed by a simple game of scrabble.

Hannibal’s first birthday celebration would be tough to beat.

After breakfast, Will had even showed him the wonky birthday cake in the fridge, that he’d put together while Hannibal slept.

Giving into his yearning for his partner, Hannibal knocked the scrabble board aside, drew Will into his arms and feasted upon his neck.

*

After leaving Will with his wrists cuffed behind his back on the lounge chair with semen splashed both on his stomach as well as running down his inner thighs, Hannibal walked naked into the kitchen, cut himself another slice of birthday cake and returned. Will sat up, grinning and opening his mouth, so Hannibal spooned off a chunk and placed it in his mouth. As Hannibal then sat beside him, Will nestled over so his face lay on his lover’s upper thigh. Taking the key from the pocket of his trousers flung to the floor, Hannibal undid the handcuffs and threw them on the ground, before stroking his hair, as Will ran his own fingers up and down his thigh.

“Did you have a good birthday?”

“I had an excellent birthday,” Hannibal admitted.

Will rolled over so he was looking up at him, a wide grin stretching his mouth.

“That makes me happy to hear.”

*

As soon as Will entered the kitchen, Hannibal pounced, nuzzling his neck and groping him.

“Not in the mood right now,” Will yawned, as he reached for the coffee percolator. “You didn’t wake me and now I’m going to be late for work.”

“You’re not going to work at all. Ring up and cancel.”

A deep groove appeared in Will’s forehead, as his lips pouted.

“I’ve used up all of my sick pay.”

Hannibal took out the torn slip of paper and handed it over.

“I intend to use one of my birthday gifts today.”

In the past month, he’d used up three of the household chore ones, as well as the one in which Will had to deliberately lose a game of chess. Will read the slip and looked up to Hannibal, smirking.

“Guess I’ll be taking the day off work.”

“I’m going to the art dealer to pick up the new Caravaggio print. When I arrive back, I expect you to be already prelubed and handcuffed to the bed.”

Will’s chest heaved, his pupils dilating.

“If that’s your birthday wish then I’ll oblige.”
*

Although Hannibal was a man who prided himself on being in control, by the time he arrived back home with the Caravaggio print, he was relieved to finally allow himself to become erect. Placing the print on the lounge room dresser, he continued to the bedroom, to find Will, as promised, cuffed to the bed, naked, squirming, panting and sweaty.

“You are ready?” Hannibal said, prodding his entrance to be certain he was well prepared.

“It took all of my control not to come already,” Will’s voice trembled with lust.

Hannibal removed his clothes and folded them over the desk chair.

“Yes, oh god yes!” Will moaned, watching Hannibal pour more lube onto his aching erection.

Flinging his partners leg’s aside, Hannibal entered him with one thrust. Will moaned louder.

Yes, my love. Moan for me.

Gripping his hips. Hannibal roughly pounded, the slick of his well-prepared entrance easing his way, as Will cried out with every jab inside of himself. Moving up to brace the wall, Hannibal thrust harder, looking down to Will’s face, the delicate features scrunched up in ecstasy.

“I’m about to…” Will’s mouth opened, his cheeks flushed, sweat dripping down his forehead, as his erection jolted thick wads of come on his stomach, without even being touched by Hannibal. “Wow that’s never happened before…”

Hannibal collapsed down on top of him, slowing down his intense movement, nuzzling his neck, digging his nails into his hips. Will wrapped his legs around Hannibal’s waist for better access. He may have come already, but Hannibal didn’t want it to end so soon, preferring to stay inside him for as long as possible. Hence, he bit into his flesh, caressed his body, brought

himself to the brink of climax before bringing himself down. Finally, after the fourth time of prolonging his orgasm, Hannibal thrust hard inside his Will, flinging his head back and coming so hard he momentarily blacked out. Collapsing down onto him again, he licked his neck, as he undid the cuffs.

“Damn, Hannibal. I could now sleep for a good twenty years, I’m exhausted!”

Will rolled over and rested his face on his arm, achingly beautiful in that serene moment. Unable to resist, Hannibal reached for his mobile, tore it off the charger and snapped a photo.

“Did you just take a picture of me?” Will asked.

Hannibal located the snap, which was off a tousle haired Will from the bare shoulders up with a light smile uptilting lips, his eyes lustrous, his expression one of a man who had everything he could ever ask for. He kissed the screen and turned to show it to Will.

“So, that makes it pretty obvious we just had sex,” Will said, with a wry tone.

Hannibal placed the mobile back on the charger and nestled behind Will on the bed, curling up behind him and wrapping his arms around his warm, firm frame.

“If I’m not going to work today, I can show you my research for potential new prey.”

“I would be delighted to see it,” Hannibal said, kissing his shoulder.

*

Later that night, after another satisfying bout of intimacy where this time Will handcuffed Hannibal to the bed and use his mouth to pleasure him, before climbing on top and allowing Hannibal to enter him as he rode both to orgasm, Hannibal lay awake, listening to the soft sounds of Will’s breath.

To wake him and indulge in more intimacy, or feed my mind with meditation?

Hannibal kissed along the curve of his left shoulder.

No, I’ll leave him to rest and gather strength, for another round of intense lovemaking when he wakes.

Drawing back the covers, Hannibal pulled on his dressing gown and ugg boots and padded through the house, opened the back door and stepped out onto the veranda. Instantly, the dogs came over to pant and jump up at him. Hannibal gave all three a swift pat, before settling down into a chair to meditate, enjoying the sharp breeze on his skin.

Time zeroed to nothing, as he focused on the push and pull of his breath. The screen door opening refocused his attention and Will came out and sat down beside him, reaching out and taking his hand.

“Sorry if I interrupted your meditating,” Will said.

“You are always a welcome distraction,” Hannibal admitted, as the dogs barked and jumped up for multiple pats from their true master, which Will acceded to, before grabbing Hannibal’s hand again.

“Any other birthday wishes you want to fulfil tonight?” Will asked.

Hannibal dug into his dressing gown pocket and handed Will another piece of ticked torn paper, reading *You can choose one a person to murder. Anyone. Anytime.*

. “My answer will surprise you.”

Will turned in his seat to face him, his eyes a fiery blaze in his pale face.

“My answer is *me*. If there is ever a time, where a choice has to be made between your life and mine, I will sacrifice my own.”

“When would that choice ever occur? I don’t get what you mean, Hannibal,” a line appeared between Will’s eyebrows.

“I mean that against all odds, as a psychopath, I place your life before mine. Your life is worthier, Will. I wouldn’t make this decision for anyone else but you. Even if a small child was at risk, over my own life, I would sacrifice them.”

“Hannibal-“

“It’s not societally correct to state I would sacrifice others for my own life but I don’t care for them. I do care for you. Only you, Will.” He handed him the paper. “It’s more of a symbolic gesture, but I would sacrifice myself now, for you. And that is the highest honour I can give, being who I am.”

“Wow…” Will placed the paper in his pocket. “I was hoping you’d say you wanted to kill a genocidal world leader.”

“Oh, we can still do that.”

Will squeezed his hand tighter.

“I gave myself in to the police for you. I would do anything to keep your trust, your love.”

“Things are perfect now, between us,” Will said. “Keep doing what you’re doing. Maybe if you keep making those butternut pancakes, that will help keep me here with you.”

Hannibal’s grin widened. As always, he was astonished by the love that filled his heart, with the man beside him, and only the man beside him, as would always be.

Will slunk out of his chair and sat down in Hannibal’s lap, his mouth tasting of coffee and chocolate and wine and cheese souffle and him. His Will. His love.

“Perfect indeed, my love,” Hannibal said, before their mouths locked again.

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